

**A Re-Assessment of the Strategic Role of the Channel Islands during the
Great French War (1792-1815)**

Submitted by James Michael Villalard to the University of Exeter
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Abstract

Although it has long been portrayed as the nation's 'moat defensive', recent examinations of Anglo-French rivalry during the long eighteenth century have revealed that the English Channel was, in reality, a highly permeable and vulnerable maritime border territory. Within this context, the Channel Islands assumed a strategic and tactical significance which was vastly disproportionate to their physical size, population or resources; emerging as what Morieux terms 'a lynchpin of control' over local shipping and trade. Although a great deal of research has been already undertaken – particularly in relation to the Channel Islands' role as a base for commerce-raiding and intelligence gathering – much of this has covered the entire long eighteenth century. However, it was only during the Great French War that the British government embraced the military potential of the Channel Islands to the fullest; not only exploiting the inhabitants' knowledge of the seas and intimacy with her 'enemies', but also transforming the archipelago into a chain of offshore fortresses. In addition, prior scholarship has often focused on individual aspects of the Channel Islands' involvement in the Great French War; while local historians have tended to embrace the 'Great Man' approach, examining the period through the lens of the careers of local commanders. Consequently, this thesis seeks to provide a more complete picture of the Channel Islands' role within Britain's military and naval strategy; integrating an examination of local defence and security with several of already well-covered topics. Moreover, in light of the fact that existent scholarship has often centred upon 'Great Men', it is hoped that the thesis shall serve to better demonstrate the extent to which the celebrated achievements of Don, Doyle and D'Auvergne rested upon the efforts of a number of 'unsung heroes'.

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Definitions

Assignat – Paper currency issued in France between 1789 and 1796.

Bailiff – Head of the Judiciary and Legislature in each Bailiwick

Branchage – Twice-annual road inspection conducted in the *Bailiwick* of Jersey.

Centenier – Officers of the *Police Honorifique*; subordinate to the *Connétables*.

Chemin – Public highways in the Channel Islands.

Chevauchée – Triennial road inspection conducted in the *Bailiwick* of Guernsey.

Comité de Secours de Jersey – Organisation responsible for the distribution of aid to Jersey's émigré community

Connétable – Civil head of each Parish in the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey; in Jersey, also served as commanders of the *Police Honorifique*.

Douzaine – The local council in each of Guernsey's parishes.

Enditement – The parochial assembly or court in each of Jersey's parishes.

Gensage – a lay-by or passing place on the *Chemins*.

Inspecteur du Chemin – Officer appointed to assist in the enforcement of the *Branchage* and *Chevauchée*.

Livre – Currency of Jersey before 1834.

Jurat – In the Royal Courts of Jersey and Guernsey, men (and now women) elected to serve as 'Judges of Fact', but not of Law.

Officier du Connétable – Most junior rank of the *Police Honorifique*.

Le Police Honorifique – Jersey's unpaid police force.

Procureur du Bien Public – Responsible for serving lawsuits and collecting fines in each of Jersey's parishes.

Vingtaine – Administrative sub-divisions of Jersey twelve parishes.

Vingtenier – Officers of the *Police Honorifique*; subordinate to the *Centenier*.

Abbreviations

ABPO – Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l'Ouest

ABSJ – Annual Bulletin of the *Société Jersiaise*

ADM – Admiralty Series

AN – *Archives Nationales*

BH – British History

BL – The British Library

BMJ – British Medical Journal

DHC – Devon Heritage Centre

EHR – English Historical Review

FO – Foreign Office Series

GSG – Guernsey States *Greffe*

HCA – High Court of Admiralty Series

History – Journal of The Historical Association

HO – Home Office Series

IJMH – International Journal of Maritime History

INS – Intelligence and National Security

JBS – Journal of British Studies

JGLR – Jersey and Guernsey Law Review

JMH – Journal of Military History

JTH – Journal of Transport History

LF – *Livre Français* (French currency) not to be confused with the Jersey *Livre*.

MM – Mariner's Mirror

MMJ – Maltese Medical Journal

NMM – National Maritime Museum

OCRE – Officer Commanding, Royal Engineers

PC – Privy Council Series

PLG – Priaulx Library Guernsey

PLO – Priaulx Library Online

PP – Past and Present

RFS – *Revue Française de Sociologie*

Regt(s) – Regiment(s)

SJA – States of Jersey Archives

SJL – States of Jersey Library

SH – Social History

SROI – Suffolk Record Office, Ipswich Branch

THJ – The Historical Journal

THM – The Heritage Magazine

TSG – Transactions of the *Société Guernesiaise*

TNA – The National Archives

WH – War in History

WO – War Office Series

Chapter One – Introduction

First proposed by Seeley in 1883, the concept of the ‘Second Hundred Years War’ is now widely used by scholars on both sides of the Channel as a standard framework for the study of Anglo-French relations during the long eighteenth century (c. 1685-1830).¹ According to this model, the Great French War is depicted as the final act in a century-long struggle for ‘naval, colonial, commercial, financial and industrial supremacy’,² and the inevitable result of colonial proxy-wars, espionage, and a military and naval arms race.³ Although recent scholarship has questioned the validity of this stereotypical image, the aftermath of the French Revolution is still often described as the ‘birth of ‘modern’ or ‘total’ war’.⁴ As highlighted by Bell and Daly, the period was characterised by ‘an astonishing increase in the scope and intensity of warfare’⁵ as ‘states and societies mobilised for war on an unprecedented scale’,⁶ while Malkasian observes that ‘new ideas of patriotism...brought the nation into war for the first time’.⁷ Similarly, the naval actions of the period may be regarded as marking the zenith of the ‘age of sail’,⁸ the post-1815 technological revolution witnessing the emergence of steam-powered, armoured warships.⁹

¹ J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England: Two Courses of Lectures* (London, 1883), cited in R. Morieux, *The Channel: England, France and the Construction of a Maritime Border in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2016) p. 1

² P. Harling, ‘A Tale of Two Conflicts: Critiques of the British War Effort, 1793-1815’, in M. Philp (ed.), *Resisting Napoleon: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797-1815* (Aldershot, 2006) p. 19

³ M. Acerra and J. Meyer, *Marines et Révolution* (Rennes, 1988), cited in W.S. Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict in the French Navy, 1789-94* (Cambridge, 1995) pp. 7-8; and A. Page, *Britain and the Seventy Years War, 1744-1815; Enlightenment, Revolution and Empire* (London, 2015) pp. 12-13

⁴ Morieux, *The Channel*, p. 229

⁵ D.A. Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Modern Warfare as We Know It* (New York City, New York, 2007) p. 48

⁶ G. Daly, ‘Plunder on the Peninsula: British Soldiers and Local Civilians during the Peninsular War, 1808-13’, in E. Charters, E. Rosenhaft, H. Smith, (eds.), *Civilians and War in Europe, 1618– 1815*, (Liverpool, 2012) p. 210

⁷ C. Malkasian, *A History of Modern Wars of Attrition* (Westport, Connecticut, 2002) p. 13

⁸ L. Sondhaus, *Navies of Europe: 1815-2002* (Abingdon, 2002) p. 6

⁹ J. Black, *War in the Nineteenth Century, 1800-1914* (Cambridge, 2009) pp. 71, 78, 81 and 85; and J. Black, *Western Warfare, 1775-1882* (Chesham, 2001) p. 69

For the Channel Islands too, the Great French War should be regarded as a landmark moment in their history, particularly in terms of their strategic relationship with Great Britain. As has been acknowledged in a number of recent studies,¹⁰ the defeat of Napoleon and the birth of 'modern' war signalled the end of the Channel Islands' ability to act as 'strategic outposts off a frequently hostile European coast'.¹¹ Following the loss of Continental Normandy in 1204 (see below), Jersey, Guernsey and her sister islands had assumed a prominent position on the Anglo-French maritime border; initially by providing safe harbour for vessels engaged in the cross-Channel wine and wool trades.¹² However, as Jamieson observed, the expansion of the Royal Navy prior to the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-14) and the emergence of a coherent British maritime strategy caused a dramatic shift in the dynamic of this relationship.¹³ Although the importance of the Channel Islands as a military asset had never been questioned,¹⁴ it was only during the eighteenth century that their exploitation took on an 'offensive' character. Not only were they regarded as valuable outposts (see sections i and iii), but it was during the Great French War that the Channel Islands enjoyed their heyday as an asset within the context of 'economic warfare' (see section ii).

Consequently, while it would be impossible to argue that their possession represented a decisive factor in the outcome of the Great French War, it is the contention of this thesis that the Channel Islands conferred a significant local

¹⁰ G.S. Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port, Guernsey, 1680-1831' PhD Thesis, (University of Leicester, 1994) p. 187-188; and J.D. Kelleher, 'The Triumph of the Country: The Rural Community in Nineteenth Century Jersey' PhD Thesis, (University of Warwick, 1991) pp. 8-9

¹¹ R.M. Crossan, 'Guernsey 1814-1914: Migration in a Modernising Society' PhD Thesis, (University of Leicester, 2005) p. 1

¹² J. Sumption, *Trial by Battle: The Hundred Years War I* (London, 2010) pp. 454 and 471

¹³ A.G. Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and British Maritime Strategy, 1689-1945', in Jamieson (ed.), 'A People of the Sea': *A Maritime History of the Channel Islands* (London, 1986) p. 220

¹⁴ Morieux, *The Channel*, p. 123

advantage upon whichever side could lay claim to their control. Although nineteenth-century writers frequently sought to depict the fortification of the Channel Islands as a military ‘white elephant’ – often citing the fact that Fort Regent cost more than £375,000 to build, yet never saw action¹⁵ – such arguments are possible only *ex post facto*. First and foremost, they ignore the consistent description of the Channel Islands by the civil and military authorities as ‘a valuable part of His Majesty’s Dominions’,¹⁶ as well as the fact that rumours of their capture – though quickly refuted – were sufficient to engender panic in the City of London.¹⁷ Nor was the belief in their military potential restricted to the British authorities: both Vauban and De Caux had advocated the fortification of Cherbourg as a safeguard against an invasion of the Cotentin from the Channel Islands.¹⁸ Likewise, in his treatise on the defence of Great Britain, Dumouriez¹⁹ observed that a naval force based in either Jersey or Guernsey posed a direct threat to ‘all communications and all traffic between the [French] Channel ports’.²⁰

However, while it is true that the central premise of this thesis is by no means original,²¹ and that several of the topics discussed herein have been the subject of extensive academic research (see below), a significant gap exists nonetheless within current scholarship. At present, it appears that no attempt

¹⁵ W. Davies, *Fort Regent: A History* (Jersey, 1972) p. 37

¹⁶ TNA, WO 1/602, Small to Nepean, July 23rd 1794; WO 1/604, ‘General Order issued by Small’, March 4th 1796; WO 1/607, States of Jersey to Dundas, May 1st 1798; and WO 1/608, Gordon to Hobart, September 27th 1801

¹⁷ *The Times*, March 18th 1794

¹⁸ Morieux, *The Channel*, pp. 113-114

¹⁹ Although he had defected from the Revolutionary Army in 1794, Dumouriez had played a key role in the planning of the attempted invasions of Jersey in 1779 and 1781. See A. Franklin, M. Philp, K. Navickas, *Napoleon and the Invasion of Britain* (Oxford, 2003) pp. 61-62

²⁰ J. Holland Rose, A. Meyrick Broadley (eds.), *Dumouriez and the Defence of England Against Napoleon* (London, 1909) pp. 319-320

²¹ A. King, ‘Relations of the British Government with the Émigrés and Royalists’ PhD Thesis, (University of London, 1931) pp. xviii-xix; and ‘Jersey: Centre D’Espionnage au Debut de la Periode Revolutionnaire’ *RHM* 9:15:3 (1934) 424

has yet been made to conduct a comprehensive study of the Channel Islands' role in the Great French War, or to analyse the various aspects of their involvement in the context of contemporary strategic policy. However, not only is this study designed to demonstrate the extent to which the Channel Islands enhanced regional military and maritime operations against post-Revolutionary France, but it is also hoped that it shall have a significant impact upon the study of local history. Although the abovementioned studies carried out by Cox, Crossan and Kelleher have added greatly to our understanding of the transformation of the Channel Islands during the nineteenth century, many of the changes witnessed during that period were rooted in the events of the Great French War.²² Even by the middle of the nineteenth century, the complexion of life in the bailiwicks had been transformed beyond all recognition: a process which had, to a certain extent, been catalysed by the reforms introduced to protect the Islands from the threat of Republicanism.

The Geography and Demography of the Islands

Within his recent study of Anglo-French relations during the long eighteenth-century, Morieux has argued that the Channel Islands played a prominent role in support of Britain's policy of *mare clausum*, effectively serving as a 'linchpin of control over the maritime border'.²³ Throughout the long eighteenth century, the local privateering fleets – in company with a host of hired vessels and Royal Navy scouts – preyed upon French mercantile traffic passing in and out of a chain of ports from Cherbourg to Brest (see section ii).²⁴ Moreover, the strategic significance of the Channel Islands was acknowledged by French naval

²² Crossan, 'Guernsey 1814-1914', p. 78

²³ Morieux, *The Channel*, p. 124

²⁴ P. Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade: Privateering, 1793-1815* (Aldershot, 1989) pp. 70-71

strategists of the period; in 1734, De Caux had warned that vessels arriving from the Atlantic ‘had no option but to sail between the [English] ports of Portsmouth and Portland...and the [Channel Islands]’.²⁵ However, it must be emphasised that the exploitation of the Channel Islands as a base for commerce raiding was complicated by the dangerous nature of local navigation; indeed, storms often forced British naval officers to withdraw from Channel Island waters.²⁶ Moreover, while shipwreck was a frequent occurrence – on November 23rd 1798, seven vessels belonging to a convoy sailing from Bordeaux to Brest were lost in the Bay of Douarnenez²⁷ – the Race of Alderney was particularly treacherous,²⁸ as were the reefs and sunken rocks spread across the Bay of St. Malo.²⁹

As to their demographic makeup at the end of the long eighteenth century, both Jersey and Guernsey were characterised by an emerging rural-urban divide; one which was to grow increasingly visible throughout the Great French War and dominate local life during the nineteenth century. Even by 1914, the only significant areas of urbanisation were the towns of St. Helier in Jersey and St. Peter Port in Guernsey the smaller ports of St. Aubin, Gorey and Rozel in Jersey and St. Sampson in Guernsey, and the town of St. Anne in Alderney. Of the latter, only St. Anne exhibited the ‘nucleated’ pattern typical of British villages,³⁰ but the privileged position enjoyed by the local fishing fleets during

²⁵ De Caux, ‘State of the Coast of *Basse-Normandie*, with the Preparations and Improvements Which May Conveniently be Done for the Protection and Security of Trade, February 1st 1734’, cited in Morieux, *The Channel*, p. 124

²⁶ TNA, FO 95/606, D’Auvergne to Woodford, November 25th 1795; and SJA, L/F/95/B/9, ‘Letter from Don to ‘My Dear Sir’ Concerning Intelligence from D’Auvergne Concerning the Movement of French Troops, the Armament of Cherbourg and the Threat to Alderney’, October 27th 1811

²⁷ TNA, WO 1/922/5, ‘Translation of Intelligence from Brest’, December 30th 1796

²⁸ TNA, PC 1/117B, D’Auvergne to Dundas, December 19th 1795; and FO 95/612/43, D’Auvergne to Nepean, September 2nd 1800

²⁹ TNA, FO 95/617, D’Auvergne to Hobart, July 29th 1801

³⁰ Kelleher, ‘The Triumph of the Country’, pp. 42-44; and Cox, ‘Transformation of St. Peter Port’, p. 53

wartime (see chapter seven)³¹ provided the foundation for their emergence within nineteenth-century regional maritime commerce.³² Moreover, the emergence of an increasingly influential mercantile class (see section ii) encouraged tensions between the Islands' urban commercial centres and the almost exclusively agrarian outlying parishes. This was exacerbated by the fact that the majority of the inhabitants of the latter seldom had any dealings with their counterparts in the towns, except in relation to the sale and exportation of produce and the periodic assemblage of the States.³³

Aside from the 'rural-urban' divide, the Great French War was also marked by increasing tensions between 'native' Channel Islanders and those regarded under local law as 'foreigners'. As will become clear in later chapters, the civil codes of both bailiwicks shaped many aspects of their involvement in British military affairs; however, the disabilities against 'strangers' were particularly problematic, since the concept also encompassed all British citizens.³⁴ Being at the centre of a historic international trade network (see chapter six) and well-established as a refugee for those fleeing Normandy and Brittany in times of war (see chapter nine), the inhabitants were used to the presence of outsiders.³⁵ However, the authorities in both Jersey and Guernsey remained strict in their attitudes towards the rights of temporary residents: for example, no 'foreigner' was permitted to take lodgings in the Islands or marry a 'native' without the permission of the Lieutenant-Governor.³⁶ Consequently, the

³¹ R. Morieux, 'Diplomacy from Below and Belonging: Fishermen and Cross-Channel Relations in the Eighteenth Century', *PP* 202 (2009) 86-87

³² *TNA*, HO 98/31, Doyle to Hawkesbury, February 20th 1808; HO 98/15, Don to Ryder, February 17th 1810; and *SJA*, A/A1/3, Letter of August 3rd 1810

³³ Cox, 'Transformation of St. Peter Port', p. 55

³⁴ Crossan, 'Guernsey 1814-1914', p. 184

³⁵ T. Thornton, *The Channel Islands, 1370-1640: Between England and Normandy* (London, 2012) p. 112

³⁶ *BL*, Add MS 37862, D'Auvergne to Windham, October 20th, 1796; and A.J. Le Cras, *Guide to the Island of Jersey* (Jersey, 1834) pp. 13 and 135

outbreak of hostilities in 1793 aroused a climate of fear and distrust respecting 'foreigners' of any origin,³⁷ including foreign garrison troops within the British service³⁸ and natives of allied and neutral states (see chapter five).

While the friction between the 'native' Islanders and the 'foreign' garrison caused problems similar to those experienced in most frontier outposts,³⁹ the Channel Islands were also destabilised by tensions arising from differences of religious affiliation amongst the civilian population. Prior to 1499, when a papal bull had formalised their transference to the Diocese of Winchester, the Catholic Church in both Jersey and Guernsey had been administered from Normandy, within which they had formed part of the Diocese of Coutances.⁴⁰ Together with the Channel Islands' proximity to the French coast, this historic link ensured that the local experience of the Reformation was heavily influenced by French Calvinism,⁴¹ the bailiwicks being brought into union with the Anglican Communion only during the reign of Elizabeth I.⁴² However, while the majority of the inhabitants were members of the Church of England, the expansion of the Channel Islands' trade connections during the eighteenth century had led to the establishment of small, yet significant, communities of Quakers (post 1742)⁴³ and Wesleyan Methodists (post 1775).⁴⁴ In addition, the arrival of the first French *émigrés* in 1791⁴⁵ can be seen as having laid the foundations for the

³⁷ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to *Connétable* D'Auvergne of St. Ouen, December 28th 1799, and 'Circular from Le Couteur to the *Connétables*', December 16th 1800

³⁸ See TNA, WO 1/419, Eton to Huskisson, Jersey, May 12th 1800

³⁹ D. Gregory, *Malta, Britain and the European Powers* (London, 1996) p. 265

⁴⁰ J.M. Hayden, *The Catholicisms of Coutances: Varieties of Religion in Early-Modern France, 1350-1789* (Montreal, 2013) p. 20

⁴¹ Crossan, 'Guernsey 1814-1914', p. 174

⁴² Kelleher, 'The Triumph of the Country', p. 35

⁴³ A. Hall, 'History of the Quakers in Jersey', *ABSJ* 28:3 (2003) 375-386

⁴⁴ C. Yrigoyen, and S.E. Warrick, *Historical Dictionary of Methodism* (Lanham, Maryland, 2013) p. 110

⁴⁵ *The Times*, March 9th 1791

reintroduction of Catholicism to the Channel Islands,⁴⁶ the provisions of the various Relief Acts having not been introduced therein.⁴⁷

The Constitutional Relationship with Great Britain

In addition to the aforementioned *de jure* distinction between ‘natives’ and ‘foreigners’, the legislative structures of the Channel Islands exhibited a number of other traits which reflected their nature as a ‘border territory’. Rather than being derived from a single legal tradition, the judicial, legislative and executive machinery of the Channel Islands represented an intersection of English Common Law, Norman Customary Law and French Civil Law.⁴⁸ Their constitutional status was no less ambiguous: the Elizabethan jurist Sir Edward Coke had described the Islands as being ‘parcel of the Crown of England, [but] not of the Realm of England’.⁴⁹ This crucial distinction, underpinning the independence of the Channel Islands from the authority of Westminster (see chapters two, five and six) was rooted in the events of the thirteenth century, and particularly King John’s failure to repel the Franco-Breton invasion of Normandy (1202-04). Despite being beyond the scope of this thesis, an appreciation of the wider impact of this particular event is vital to understanding the complex political relationship which exists, even now, between the Channel Islands and Great Britain.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Du Tressay, L’Abbe, *Vie de Matthieu de Gruchy* (Paris, 1868) pp. 136-137

⁴⁷ Cox, ‘The Transformation of St. Peter Port’, p. 100

⁴⁸ S. Farran, E. Öricü and S. Patrick Donlan (eds.), *A Study of Mixed Legal Systems: Endangered, Entrenched or Blended* (London, 2016) p. 7

⁴⁹ Sir Edward Coke, unidentified source, cited in P. Falle and P. Morant (eds.), *Caesarea: or an Account of the Island of Jersey, The Greatest of the Islands Around the Coast of England, or the Ancient Duchy of Normandy* (London, 1797) p. 217

⁵⁰ S. Mariani, ‘Jersey and the Public International Law Dimensions of Sovereignty’, *JGLR* 17:1 (2013) 20

During the first half of the thirteenth century, a number of conflicts were fought by the Kings of England and France for control of Normandy; however, in spite of the French conquest of Normandy, the Channel Islands remained firmly in English hands. Consequently, although the Treaty of Paris (1259) required Henry III to give up all claims to his Continental holdings,⁵¹ he was permitted – in his person as ‘Peer of France and Duke of Normandy’ – to retain the Channel Islands as a feudal possession.⁵² This near-unique arrangement⁵³ also entitled the inhabitants to enjoy all the rights and privileges of English subjects without falling under the authority of the English Parliament;⁵⁴ an advantage which was actively exploited by the islanders, contributing greatly to their economic prosperity.⁵⁵ However, in the case of issues such as smuggling and impressment,⁵⁶ the zeal with which the Channel Islanders defended their constitutional privileges often brought them into direct conflict with the British government (see chapter seven).⁵⁷ Although these confrontations will be explored in greater detail in the main body of the thesis, it is advisable to provide a brief general summary of the causes of constitutional tensions.

In essence, the difficulty arose from the inhabitants’ own identity as British subjects, particularly as expressed in 1771 by Guernsey’s then-Bailiff, William Le Marchant. In an official treatise on the Island’s law code, he had reiterated the status of the British monarch as ‘Kings of England, yet Dukes of Normandy’, emphasising that, unlike their counterparts in Britain, the Channel Islanders

⁵¹ Morieux, ‘Diplomacy from Below’, 91

⁵² J. Everard and J.C. Holt, *Jersey 1204: The Forging of an Island Community* (London, 2004) p. 115

⁵³ The only other territory to enjoy this distinction is the Isle of Man.

⁵⁴ See P. Johnson, ‘Orders in Council and the Extension of Acts of Parliament to the Channel Islands’, *JGLR* 16:3 (2012) 280

⁵⁵ Morieux, *The Channel*, pp. 251-253

⁵⁶ R.W. Avery, ‘The Naval Protection of Britain’s Maritime Trade, 1793-1802’ DPhil Thesis, (University of Oxford, 1983) p. 51

⁵⁷ *TNA*, HO 99/3, Beckett to Don, May 18th 1809; and PC 1/4507, Doyle to D’Auvergne, December 28th 1809

swore loyalty, 'not as conquered or feudatory subjects, but as subjects of the Conqueror'.⁵⁸ Therefore, the respective States Assemblies were considered answerable only to His Majesty in Council, to whom local Acts had to be submitted for review before being granted the Royal Assent,⁵⁹ and whose ruling had to be sought before any constitutional changes could be made.⁶⁰ Likewise, many Islanders looked upon their independence from Westminster as being nothing more or less than just reward for their historic fealty towards the Crown,⁶¹ as symbolised by the requirement of all male inhabitants to render unpaid service in the militia.⁶² Consequently, although the provisions of an Act of Parliament could be extended to the Channel Islands through the application of a parallel Order in Council,⁶³ this power was rarely exercised, since it was often interpreted as transgressing the liberties of the Islands.⁶⁴

Despite the Islanders' collective assurances of their loyalty, the inability of Westminster to exercise control over the affairs of the bailiwicks resulted in their continuing to be regarded as a potential security risk. In particular, fears that the Channel Islands might fall victim to the lure of republicanism or fifth-columnist activity⁶⁵ were exacerbated by the inhabitants' aforementioned attachment to their independence. Although the provisions of *Magna Carta* had not extended

⁵⁸ W. Le Marchant, *Rights and Immunities of the Island of Guernsey* (London, 1771) p. 31

⁵⁹ 'Order in Council Concerning Acts of the States of Jersey Dated April 18th 1785 and May 27th 1785' and 'Order in Council Concerning Acts of the States of Jersey Dated July 10th 1782, June 16th 1784 and October 5th 1785', in *SJA*, L/C/67/J2/10-11, 'Orders in Council Concerning Disputes Between the Lieutenant-Bailiff and Jurats and the Clergy and Constables', June 2nd 1786

⁶⁰ Johnson, 'Orders in Council', 280

⁶¹ *TNA*, HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Dundas, February 19th 1793; and *SJA*, L/F/97/M2/39, 'Letter to *The Times* from Philippe de Carteret, *Greffier*, Warning of a Possible French Attack on Jersey', March 15th 1794

⁶² *TNA*, HO 98/9, Gordon to Pelham, March 14th 1803; and *SJA*, L/F/22/L/32, 'Printed Account of the Trial of Philip Arthur for Absenting Himself from Military Drill on Sundays', 1808

⁶³ Falle and Morant (eds.), *Caesarea*, p. 218

⁶⁴ *TNA*, HO 42/81/127, 'Letter from the Clerk of the Privy Council to the Royal Court of Guernsey', November 21st 1805; and PC 1/2298, 'Petition Against [The Anti-Smuggling Act] As Far As It Affects Guernsey, From Daniel de Lisle Brock on Behalf of the States of Guernsey', 1805

⁶⁵ *TNA*, HO 98/9, Gordon to Pelham, January 26th 1803

to the Channel Islands, the inhabitants' historic privileges, as derived from the Treaty of Paris (see above) were believed to have been codified within the *Constitutions of King John*.⁶⁶ Since the mid-nineteenth century, the lack of any documentary evidence⁶⁷ has resulted in the dismissal of the *Constitutions* as a 'legal fiction',⁶⁸ but at the time of the Great French War, its supposed provisions formed an essential framework for the inhabitants' relationship with Great Britain.⁶⁹ In particular, its local legislative and judicial influence served to reinforce the status of the Channel Islands as a possession of the Crown, meaning that, unlike many other British territories, they were not made to suffer the forcible transplantation of an 'unblemished' alien political system.⁷⁰

Unfortunately, the faith placed by the Islanders in the privileges enshrined in the *Constitutions* gave rise to a crucial weakness within the local political system, one exacerbated by the intense parochialism of island society in general (see chapter five). Throughout the 1770s, calls for political reform had become increasingly vocal,⁷¹ with the Tory satirist Shebbeare producing a number of pamphlets⁷² specifically targeting Jersey's Lempriere dynasty.⁷³ However, both bailiwicks remained under the control of a powerful oligarchy, and this reinforces the double-edged nature of the Channel Islands' relationship with Great Britain: while exemption from the authority of Parliament was regarded as

⁶⁶ Falle and Morant (eds.), *Caesarea*, pp. 244-247; and J. Sullivan, *Synopsis of the Constitutions, Charters and Privileges Granted to the Channel Islanders; Referring Especially to the Privileges Bestowed upon Them by their Norman Dukes* (London, 1869) p. 12

⁶⁷ The *Constitutions* are, however, referred to in the Charters of Edward IV and Elizabeth I

⁶⁸ C. Le Quesne, *A Constitutional History of Jersey* (London, 1856), cited in M. Dun, 'Crown Officers Review Part Two' (Jersey, 2010) Para. Ten

⁶⁹ Sullivan, *Synopsis*, p. 13

⁷⁰ H.T. Manning, *The Revolt of French Canada: 1800-1835, A Chapter of the History of the British Commonwealth* (New York, 1962) pp. 28-29

⁷¹ SJA, L/C/88/A/39, 'Letter from Dr. John Shebbeare to Nicholas Fiott Concerning Philip Lempriere's Proposed Visit to Jersey and a Petition to the Crown against the 'Tyrants' in Jersey', April 24th 1772

⁷² See J. Shebbeare, *An Authentic Narrative of the Oppressions of the Islanders of Jersey*, Two Volumes, (London, 1771); and SJA, L/F/22/L/21, 'Printed Pamphlet Entitled 'The Tyranny of the Magistrates of Jersey'', 1772

⁷³ Alongside the De Carterets, the Lemprieres were one of the most powerful Jersey families.

a cornerstone of the bailiwicks' economic prosperity (see chapter six), the majority of the population remained subject to the rule of a corrupt colonial autocracy.⁷⁴ Indeed, while the Great French War did witness a number of attempts to alleviate much of the suffering which had been highlighted by Shebbeare, the *Constitutions* remained the cause of considerable upheaval within Island society. Just as colonial *creole* leaders protested against any attempt to restrict their trade and impose regular taxation,⁷⁵ so the Channel Islands' leading families adopted a similar stance against elements of British domestic policy which appeared to threaten their position (see chapter seven).

The Internal Politics of the Islands

In terms of their formal political structure, the Channel Islands are divided into two autonomous jurisdictions: the Bailiwick of Jersey, which includes several historically important reefs;⁷⁶ and the Bailiwick of Guernsey, which includes the islands of Alderney, Sark, and Herm (see appendix a). However, while under the 'nominal superintendence' of Guernsey, the States of Alderney and the Chief Pleas of Sark retained a considerable degree of independence, especially in matters such as poor relief.⁷⁷ While this general arrangement continues to this day, the Great French War witnessed a significant change in relation to the Channel Islands' executive branch, as responsibility for local military affairs devolved to the respective Lieutenant-Governors. Even before the Great French War, the holders of the Governorships had not been 'purely' military personnel –

⁷⁴ C.A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: the British Empire and the World, 1780-1830* (London, 1989) p. 205

⁷⁵ Ibid, pp. 77-78

⁷⁶ 'Minquiers and Ecrehous Case, Judgement of November 17th 1953', in *Summaries of Judgements, Advisory Opinions and Orders of the International Court of Justice 1948-91* (New York, 1992) pp. 27-28

⁷⁷ R.M. Crossan, *Poverty and Welfare in Guernsey, 1560-2015* (London, 2015) pp. 280-281

Conway, though an experienced soldier⁷⁸ was still ‘a Whig politician of cabinet rank⁷⁹ and a consistent critic of the American War of Independence’⁸⁰ – but by 1815, the Governorships had become little more than political sinecures bestowed upon military supporters of the British administration of the day. The Governors’ reduced importance with respect to the day-to-day functioning of the local executive machinery was ultimately demonstrated by the fact that the Governorships of Jersey and Guernsey fell into abeyance and the Governorship of Alderney was returned to the Crown in exchange for a pension.

Due to the *de facto* honorific nature of their appointment, the vast majority of the wartime Governors – with the exception of the Le Mesuriers⁸¹ – were absentees; a typical example being John Pitt, 2nd Earl of Chatham, the elder brother of Pitt the Younger.⁸² Having served in a number of Cabinet positions,⁸³ Pitt was appointed to the Governorship of Jersey in 1807, but his various responsibilities as General Officer in Command of the Eastern District (1806-14), and particularly as commander of the Walcheren Expedition (1809), meant that he spent little or no time in the Island. Even so, the Governors continued to take an active interest in specific issues relating to the defence of the Channel Islands; in September 1796, for example, Amherst – then Governor of Guernsey – assisted in ‘fast-tracking’ an application to the Board of Ordnance

⁷⁸ Conway had seen action at Dettingen (1743), Fontenoy (1745) Culloden (1745) and Lauffeld (1747) during the War of the Austrian Succession, had served on garrison duty at Menorca (1751), and held the post of Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance from 1767 until 1772, when he was appointed Governor of Jersey (see appendix b).

⁷⁹ Conway’s political appointments included: Chief Secretary for Ireland (1755-57); Secretary of State for the Southern Department (1765-66); and Secretary of State for the Northern Department (1766-68).

⁸⁰ C. Platt, *Concise History of Jersey: A New Perspective* (Jersey, 2009) p. 66

⁸¹ The Governorship of Alderney was held by the Le Mesurier family as a hereditary title. See TNA, HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Dundas, March 17th 1793

⁸² A detailed examination of Chatham’s career can be found in J. Reiter, *The Late Lord Chatham: The Life of John Pitt, 2nd Earl of Chatham* (Barnsley, 2017)

⁸³ First Lord of the Admiralty (1788-94); Lord Privy Seal (1794-98); Lord President of the Council (1796-1801); and Master-General of the Ordnance (1801-06)

for six 6-pdr guns, eight 24-pdr carronades and 300 barrels of powder intended for the batteries then under construction on the Island's south coast.⁸⁴ Similarly, when a dispute arose concerning the suitability of Major Dumaresq to succeed to a Lieutenant-Colonelcy in the militia regiment commanded by his brother,⁸⁵ Howard – then Governor of Jersey – desired to 'obtain every proper information upon the subject' and sought the consultation of the States.⁸⁶

As a result of the increasing prominence of the Lieutenant-Governors, the leadership of each Bailiwick during the eighteenth century might best be described as a 'rule of two', divided between the Bailiff (the Legislature and Judiciary) and the Lieutenant-Governor (the Executive). As highlighted above, the role of the latter was to exercise authority over all aspects of military life in his jurisdiction, to hold custody of the fortresses, and to exercise command of the troops of the garrison and militia.⁸⁷ However, at the beginning of the Great French War, it remained customary for each Bailiwick to retain a 'Commander-in-Chief' (see appendix b) who would exercise authority over the troops in the event of his absence, incapacity or death.⁸⁸ With regards to the role of the Bailiff, this was outwardly identical in both Jersey and Guernsey: the office-holder performing a dual function as both 'President of the States', and 'Chief Justice of the Royal Court'.⁸⁹ However, the aftermath of the Jersey Rebellion in 1769⁹⁰ – specifically the promulgation of the *Code de Loi, 1771*⁹¹ – had led to a

⁸⁴ TNA, WO 1/604, Dalrymple to Huskisson, September 6th 1796

⁸⁵ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, Gordon to Howard, February 23rd 1796

⁸⁶ TNA, PC 1/117A/330, Howard to Pipon and Dumaresq, May 17th 1796

⁸⁷ W. Pleas, *An Account of the Island of Jersey* (London, 1817) p. 220

⁸⁸ TNA, HO 99/1, 'Letters Patent Issued to Col. (Later Mjr-Gen.) John Small as Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Guernsey'

⁸⁹ Due to this dual role, the Bailiff was, and is, almost invariably appointed from amongst the senior Law Officers and Jurats.

⁹⁰ Le Quesne, *A Constitutional History of Jersey*, pp. 440-442; and Dun, 'Crown Officers Review Part Two', Para. Ten

formal separation of powers in that Bailiwick, both with respect to the States and the Royal Court, and the judicial and legislative powers of the Bailiff.⁹²

Related to this tension between legislature and judiciary was the bailiwicks' respective experience of party politics, a catalyst for much of the social disorder in the Channel Islands during the Great French War. In Guernsey, individual States members were, as today, elected as political independents, and had no formal partisan or party affiliation; however, demographic shifts at the end of the eighteenth century had created a number of *de facto* voting blocs. In particular, the expansion of St. Peter Port⁹³ brought the 'Sixties' (the mercantile elite), into conflict with the 'Forties' (the commercial bourgeoisie),⁹⁴ while the inhabitants of the town clashed with country folk on matters of taxation and proportional representation.⁹⁵ This stood in stark contrast to the situation which existed in Jersey, where the latter half of the eighteenth century had witnessed the creation of a formal bipartite political system.⁹⁶ Taking the pro-Establishment position were the *Charlots*, the supporters of Lieutenant-Bailiff Charles Lempriere; opposing them, the 'Radical Reformist' *Jeannots*,⁹⁷ led by *Connétable* Sir Jean Dumaresq.⁹⁸ Parochial allegiance to these factions was fierce, and physical intimidation commonplace: in 1803, for example, those rector⁹⁹ who voiced their support for Gordon's attempt to introduce martial

⁹¹ SJA, D/Y/P5/1, 'Manuscript Copy of the Law Code of 1771, Together with Order in Council Approving the Code', March 28th 1771

⁹² Dun, 'Crown Officers Review Part Two', Para. Twenty-Three; and R.G. Le Hérisier, 'The Development of the Government of Jersey, 1771-1969' PhD Thesis, (University of Kent, 1971) pp. 32 and 85

⁹³ F.B. Tupper, *The History of Guernsey*, (Guernsey, 1854) p. 248

⁹⁴ Crossan, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp. 21-22

⁹⁵ Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port', p. 55

⁹⁶ Le Hérisier, 'Government of Jersey', p. 84

⁹⁷ The *Jeannots* were also widely referred to as *Les Magots*, the Jèrriais term for 'cheese mites'. This originated as a term of contempt, but was later reclaimed by the *Jeannots* as a badge of honour.

⁹⁸ SJA, F/M/R1/19, 'Jean Dumaresq, *Connétable* of St. Peter vs. States of Jersey', April 18th 1785

⁹⁹ The twelve Parish Rectors (with the exception of the Dean of Jersey) were removed from the States in 1948. The Dean remains, *ex officio*, a Member, but may not vote on parliamentary business.

law¹⁰⁰ were hung up in effigy outside the Royal Court, and a whip and halter were affixed to the gate of the Dean's parsonage.¹⁰¹

Again, since elections for both parochial and States officials would often be carried out at the door of the parish church after Sunday Eucharist, physical confrontation between the members of each faction were regarded as a natural part of the political process.¹⁰² Unfortunately, no examples have been found for the Great French War, but reports on Jersey's elections for Jurat during the 1820s¹⁰³ reveal numerous instances of violent clashes, several of which developed into riots. During an 1821 contest, 'the first man to vote Rose was belaboured with fists and umbrellas, and escaped, leaving his coat-tails in his assailants' hands',¹⁰⁴ while the *Jersey Times* reported that members of the electorate 'seemed ready to dispute with their fists the triumph of their respective sentiments.'¹⁰⁵ Here, a comparison may be drawn both to the Canadian provinces and Great Britain, wherein electoral violence and bribery were to remain in evidence until the middle of the nineteenth century. In Lower Canada, for example, the elections of 1817 saw candidates hire armed thugs as 'enforcers' and bribe their voters with bread, cheese and beer.¹⁰⁶ Similarly, while electoral bribery occurred mainly in industrial centres such as Hull and Bristol,¹⁰⁷ Saunders has calculated that over 190 incidences of electoral violence occurred nationwide during 1857-1880.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁰ TNA, HO 98/9, Gordon to Pelham, June 12th 1803

¹⁰¹ E. Durell, *The Picturesque and Historical Guide to the Island of Jersey* (Jersey, 1852) p. 70

¹⁰² H.D. Inglis, *The Channel Islands* (London, 1844) pp. 91-93

¹⁰³ By this time, the *Charlots* were known as the 'Laurel Party' and the *Jeannots* as the 'Rose Party'.

¹⁰⁴ G.R. Balleine, *A History of the Island of Jersey: From the Cave Men to the German Occupation and After* (London, 1950) p. 285

¹⁰⁵ Extract from *Jersey Times*, undated, reproduced in Pleas, *An Account of the Island of Jersey*, p. 370

¹⁰⁶ Manning, *The Revolt of French Canada*, pp. 50-51

¹⁰⁷ J. Butler, *Becoming America: The Revolution Before 1776* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2001) p. 100

¹⁰⁸ R. Saunders, *Democracy and the Vote in British Politics, 1848-1867: The Making of the Second Reform Act* (Ashgate, 2011) p. 89

Even with the development of party politics, the general environment in Jersey remained very much the same as in Guernsey, in that the practical business of both the States and the Royal Court remaining under the control of the Islands' elite families. During the late 1760s, for example, Charles Lempriere – then in his nineteenth year as Lieutenant-Bailiff – had clashed repeatedly with his cousin, Moses Corbet, the future Lieutenant-Governor and a leading member among the *Jeannots*.¹⁰⁹ Frustrated by the failure of the *Charlots* to enact reforms, Corbet had popularised the maxim that 'the world shall perish before a Lempriere shall perform a deed of goodness',¹¹⁰ and had presented to the Privy Council a petition listing the grievances of the Islanders.¹¹¹ Ultimately, this rivalry served only to heighten the intransigence of the *Charlots* and exacerbate the reformist sympathies of the *Jeannots*,¹¹² and even though the latter gained a majority in both the Royal Court and the States, politics in Jersey remained hamstrung by factionalism. As late as 1843, Coghlan declared that: 'it seems an understood thing that what Monsieur Godfrey proposes, Monsieur Le Suer opposes; and what Monsieur Le Suer proposes, Monsieur Godfrey opposes. Thus [time] is wasted by their petty jealousies and eternal bickerings'.¹¹³

The Channel Islands and the National 'Power Structure'

Although mention has been made of the nature of the military hierarchy in the Channel Islands and the responsibilities of the senior officers, it is important to provide a clear overview of the relationship between the local chain-of-

¹⁰⁹ SJA, L/C/74/C/8, 'Extract from the Marriage Register of St. Saviour of the Marriage of Charles Lempriere and Elizabeth Corbet', October 28th 1733

¹¹⁰ R. Lempriere, *History of the Channel Islands* (London, 1974) p. 128

¹¹¹ SJA, F/M/R2/1, 'Extract from St. James' Court Regarding the Report by Lieutenant-Governor Bell and Lieutenant-Bailiff Charles Lempriere Relating to the Jersey Rebellion', October 27th 1769

¹¹² *Gazette de L'Ile de Jersey*, April 9th 1791

¹¹³ F. Coghlan, *Guide to the Channel Islands* (London, 1843) p. 43

command and Britain's overall power structure. As highlighted above, the Great French War was characterised by an increasing devolution of power from the Governors to their respective Lieutenants; both in relation to command of the garrison and militia¹¹⁴ and the management of civil issues such as the licencing of trade.¹¹⁵ However, while the success enjoyed by the respective Lieutenant-Governors – particularly Gordon, Don and Doyle – is not in question (see section i), their increased independence did not develop into autonomous authority, and could serve as a flashpoint for confrontation. In January 1803, for example, the Home Secretary, Lord Pelham, was informed of a 'general disquiet' having arisen amongst the Guernsey militiamen; the cause of which was a decision to grant Sir Thomas Saumarez¹¹⁶ – then Inspector of Militia – an *ex officio* Colonelcy.¹¹⁷ Although Grey – then Governor of Guernsey – 'professed much regard' for Dalrymple, he not only disagreed with his Lieutenant's management of the controversy, but when the latter proposed a solution to the Privy Council, Grey declared that he, 'with much regret', felt obliged to speak in opposition to the proposal.¹¹⁸

In addition to occasional clashes with their absentee superiors, limitations placed on the authority of the Lieutenant-Governors had the potential to cause conflict with their colleagues in other branches of the armed forces. Although responsible for 'all aspects of military life'¹¹⁹ within their respective bailiwicks, the Lieutenant-Governors exercised only limited control over the local naval forces. It is true that they were empowered to employ civilian vessels – typically

¹¹⁴ TNA, HO 97/27, Doyle to Pelham, January 25th 1803

¹¹⁵ TNA, PC 1/4507, Order in Council, December 18th 1807

¹¹⁶ Younger brother of Admiral Sir James Saumarez, General Sir Thomas Saumarez later served as Commandant of the garrison at Halifaz, Nova Scotia and as President and Commander-in-Chief of New Brunswick. See Lempriere, *History*, p. 142

¹¹⁷ TNA, HO 97/27, Doyle to Pelham, January 25th 1803

¹¹⁸ Ibid, Pelham to Doyle, February 15th 1803

¹¹⁹ Pleas, *An Account of the Island of Jersey*, p. 220

cutters – as auxiliary scouts (see chapter seven)¹²⁰ as well as enforce quarantine regulations¹²¹ and pass judgement on applications for mercantile licenses.¹²² However, responsibility for the disposition of Royal Navy warships stationed in the Channel Islands rested solely with the Admiralty,¹²³ and on the outbreak of war, it remained necessary for the Lieutenant-Governors to make a formal application – either directly or via the Home Office – for additional vessels to be dispatched from Portsmouth.¹²⁴ Consequently, the commanders of the local squadrons remained wholly independent from the respective Lieutenant-Governors; Philippe D’Auvergne (at Jersey) answering directly to Whitehall, and Sir James Saumarez (at Guernsey) being subordinate to the commander of the Western Squadron.¹²⁵

Finally, while the authorities in the Channel Islands – both military and civil – served as the principal driving force behind the solutions to the various issues examined in this thesis, many of their initiatives required the formal approval and/or active assistance of the British government. In the case of the local fortification programme (see chapter three), proposals for improvements to the Islands’ coastal defences and requisitions for arms and stores had to be approved by the Master-General and Board of the Ordnance.¹²⁶ Likewise, D’Auvergne’s distribution of government aid to the local *émigré* community was

¹²⁰ TNA, HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Dundas and Napier, March 17th 1793

¹²¹ SJA, A/A5/2, Letter of December 30th 1808

¹²² SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of February 1st 1811

¹²³ TNA, HO 99/1, Dundas to Falle and Brown, January 12th 1793

¹²⁴ TNA, HO 98/9, Gordon to Pelham, March 14th 1803; and WO 1/604, Anon. to Dalrymple, September 9th 1796

¹²⁵ J. Davey, *In Nelson’s Wake: The Navy and the Napoleonic Wars* (New Haven, Connecticut, 2015) p. 58; and D. Shayer, *James Saumarez: The Life and Achievements of Admiral Lord Saumarez of Guernsey* (Guernsey, 2016) pp. 35-37

¹²⁶ TNA, HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Dundas, February 19th 1793; HO 99/3, Beckett to Don, September 17th 1807; HO 98/15, Don to Ryder, February 17th 1810; TNA, WO 55/809, De Butts, OCRE to Doyle, November 19th 1811; and WO 55/1549/6, ‘Doyle’s Report of the State of the Islands of Guernsey and Alderney’, undated

carried out under the authority of the Secretary of State for the Home Department,¹²⁷ while his direction of *La Correspondence* saw him acting under the direction of both the Foreign Office and War Office.¹²⁸ However, the most explicit example of the British Government's potential influence over the Channel Islands' engagement in the War is provided by their reaction to the inhabitants' involvement in the smuggling trade. From 1800, the Lords of the Treasury began to make serious attempts to force the Lieutenant-Governors to assist in its suppression,¹²⁹ but it was not until 1809 that they agreed to seek a solution which was regarded as 'consistent with the rights and privileges of the inhabitants of the Islands'.¹³⁰

While it is true that such political tensions between the Channel Islands and the British government occasionally gave rise to open conflict, such disputes did not alter the general opinion of the authorities at Westminster with regards the strategic importance of the Channel Islands. As D'Auvergne was to remind his superiors, 'the utility to which the defensive naval force allowed to these Islands might be applied [arises] from their proximity to two of the most important French Maritime Provinces'.¹³¹ Likewise, Doyle warned of 'the ruinous consequences that must follow from France being possessed of Guernsey', highlighting its potential use to the enemy as an advanced base from which to attack 'the great naval arsenals of Plymouth and Portsmouth', and as a safe harbour for a 'hoard' of enemy *corsairs*.¹³² In addition, the local garrisons were often used as a 'first-time deployment' for newly-raised corps: in September

¹²⁷ TNA, PC 1/121, D'Auvergne to the Exchequer, June 10th 1802

¹²⁸ TNA, FO 95/605/1, D'Auvergne to Windham, November 4th 1794; and WO 1/925/25, D'Auvergne to Shere, March 25th 1806

¹²⁹ TNA, HO 99/2, Circular to Gordon, Dalrymple and Le Mesurier, August 14th 1800

¹³⁰ TNA, HO 99/3, Beckett to Don, May 18th 1809

¹³¹ FO 95/611, D'Auvergne, 'Memorial to the Home Office', undated, 1799

¹³² WO 55/1549/6, 'Doyle's Report re. Guernsey and Alderney', undated

1794, for example, Small reported that the ‘raw recruits’ of the 78th and 80th Regts. of Foot had, in the course of only six months in Guernsey, ‘arrived at a pitch of discipline almost unexampled’.¹³³ However, the use of the Channel Islands as a ‘training post’ remained a controversial point with the Lieutenant-Governors (see chapter two), Don having complained that ‘the regulars in the Island are chiefly composed of recruits and boys’, calling for the addition of ‘at least 1,000 rank-and-file of stout able-bodied men’.¹³⁴

Some Notes on Existing Scholarship

Although a small number of local academics¹³⁵ have helped to raise the ‘profile’ of the Channel Islands, the traditionally Anglocentric nature of British history has meant that they have, as Moore observed, ‘slipped through the fingers of historical reporting’.¹³⁶ This situation only began to change in the 1970s, when Ommer’s groundbreaking research into nineteenth-century trans-Atlantic trade¹³⁷ coincided with the commencement of Jamieson *et al.*’s fourteen-year research project devoted to local maritime history. The latter is particularly significant, since it culminated in the publication of *A People of the Sea*: a work which – in spite of its flaws¹³⁸ – has been widely acknowledged as one of the most comprehensive studies on the subject.¹³⁹ In the thirty years since its publication, the ‘historical awareness’ of the Channel Islands has increased

¹³³ TNA, WO 1/602, Small to Anon, September 3rd 1794

¹³⁴ TNA, HO 98/15, Don to Ryder, February 17th 1810

¹³⁵ J.H. Le Patourel, M. Jones (ed.), *Feudal Empires: Norman and Plantagenet* (London, 1984); and J.H. Le Patourel, *Medieval Administration of the Channel Islands, 1199-1399*, (London, 1937)

¹³⁶ D.W. Moore, *The Other British Isles* (Jefferson, North Carolina, 2005) p. 1

¹³⁷ R.M. Ommer, ‘From Outpost to Outport: The Jersey Merchant-Triangle in the ‘Nineteenth Century’ PhD Thesis, (McGill University, 1979) Abstract

¹³⁸ R. Morriss, ‘Review of A.G. Jamieson (ed.), *‘A People of the Sea’: A Maritime History of the Channel Islands*’, *EHR* 105:414 (1990) p. 151

¹³⁹ Anon, ‘Review of A.G. Jamieson (ed.), *‘A People of the Sea’: A Maritime History of the Channel Islands*’, *ABSJ* 24:3 (1987) 407-9; and L.M. Cullen, ‘Review of A.G. Jamieson (ed.), *‘A People of the Sea’: A Maritime History of the Channel Islands*’, *IESC* 14 (1987) p. 122

considerably: for example, the issue of local privateering¹⁴⁰ has received treatment from Raban,¹⁴¹ Starkey¹⁴² and Crowhurst.¹⁴³ However, in spite of such developments, the only substantial general study of local history remains that produced by Balleine (see above); a work which, though praised for its 'meticulous references' and 'enormous industry',¹⁴⁴ has been criticised in recent years for its inclusion of several 'unsupported assertions'.¹⁴⁵

With respect to local historiography, another serious weakness which has been increasingly acknowledged in recent years is that of the extent to which the German Occupation (1940-45) has been allowed to dominate historical discourse. Despite attempts to approach the British Isles as an 'archipelago nation', the Channel Islands continue to be discussed largely in relation to the 'unique phenomenon' of their wartime experience, and specifically the Islanders' 'predicament' of being 'torn between resistance and collaboration'.¹⁴⁶ Amongst revisionist and counterfactualist historians, the Channel Islands have been treated as providing a model of a hypothetical 'Nazi Britain',¹⁴⁷ and this has led, in turn, to the development amongst local historians of a perceived 'moral

¹⁴⁰ J.S. Bromley, 'A New Vocation: Privateering in the Wars of 1689-97 and 1702-13'; A.G. Jamieson, 'The Return to Privateering: Channel Island Privateers, 1739-1783'; and W.R. Meyer, 'The Channel Islands Privateers, 1793-1815' all in Jamieson, (ed.), *A People of the Sea*

¹⁴¹ P. Raban, 'Channel Island Privateering, 1739-1763', *IJMH* 1:2 (1989); and P. Raban, 'The Profits of Privateering: A Guernsey Fleet, 1756-1762', *MM* 80:3 (1994)

¹⁴² D. Starkey, 'The Economic and Military Significance of British Privateering, 1702-1783', *JTH*, 3:9 (1988); *British Privateering Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter, 1990); and 'A Restless Spirit: British Privateering Enterprise, 1739-1815' in D. Starkey, E.S. Van Eyck Van Heslinga, J.A. De Moor, (eds.), *Pirates and Privateers: New Perspectives on the War on Trade in the 18th and 19th Centuries* (Exeter, 1997)

¹⁴³ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*; and 'Experience, Skill and Luck: French Privateering Expeditions, 1792-1815' in Starkey, Van Eyck Van Heslinga, and De Moor (eds.), *Pirates and Privateers*

¹⁴⁴ H.R.S. Pocock, 'Review: *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*', *ABSJ* 21:2 (1974) 283

¹⁴⁵ Kelleher, 'The Triumph of the Country', p. vii

¹⁴⁶ Moore, *The Other British Isles* pp. 3, 237-238 and 241

¹⁴⁷ A. Roberts and N. Ferguson, 'Hitler's England: What If Germany had Invaded Britain in May 1940?' in N. Ferguson (ed.), *Virtual History: Alternatives and Counterfactuals* (London, 1997) pp. 302-304; and G.D. Rosenfeld, *The World Hitler Never Made: Alternate History and the Memory of Nazism* (Cambridge, 2005) p. 82

imperative' to preserve an 'authentic' history of the Occupation.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, many revisionist studies have been met with considerable hostility: in 1995, Bunting's study of local collaboration and fraternisation caused a scandal even before its publication – the author being dismissed as an 'ignorant foreigner'¹⁴⁹ – while Nettles' *Jewels and Jackboots: Hitler's British Isles* led to the author being targeted by a hatemail campaign.¹⁵⁰

Although it must be acknowledged that the legacy of Occupation inflicted a 'deep and collective sense of trauma' upon the inhabitants and has rendered it 'the defining moment of their modern history',¹⁵¹ the dominance of that topic within local historical discourse has had a twofold negative effect upon local historiography. First, as Nicholas has observed, it is tempting for historians engaging in the study of other aspects of local history to seek to draw parallels with the Islanders' experiences during the Second World War,¹⁵² a line which Machin adopts briefly in his review of *A People of the Sea*.¹⁵³ Secondly, as a result of its having become 'a key aspect in the inhabitants' self-identity'¹⁵⁴ the shadow of the Occupation has, as Ronayne observed, obscured the sacrifices made by the Channel Islanders in earlier conflicts. For example, in spite of the

¹⁴⁸ G. Carr, *Legacies of Occupation: Heritage, Memory and Archaeology in the Channel Islands* (Heidelberg, 2014) pp. 107-108; J. Sallaback, 'Guernsey-French, Identity and Language Endangerment' in T. Omoniyi and G. White (eds.), *The Sociolinguistics of Identity* (London, 2006) p. 133; and C. Stephenson and C. Taylor, *The Channel Islands 1941-45: Hitler's Impregnable Fortress* (Oxford, 2006) pp. 12 and 59

¹⁴⁹ M. Bunting, *The Model Occupation: The Channel Islands Under German Rule* (London, 1995), summarised in P. Sanders, 'Narratives of Britishness: UK War Memory and Channel Islands Occupation Memory', in J. Matthews, D. Travers (eds.), *Islands and Britishness: A Global Perspective* (Cambridge, 2012) p. 30

¹⁵⁰ J. Carpenter, 'John Nettles: Telling the Truth about the Channel Islands Cost me my Friends' *Daily Express*, November 5th 2012

¹⁵¹ I. Ronayne, *'Ours': The Jersey Pals in the First World War* (Stroud, 2009) p. 139

¹⁵² Rev. T. Nicholas, *Sir George Don and his Place in the History of Jersey* (Jersey, 2004) p. 3

¹⁵³ G.I.T. Machin, 'Review of A.G. Jamieson (ed.), *'A People of the Sea': A Maritime History of the Channel Islands*', *History* 74:240 (1989) 109

¹⁵⁴ G. Carr, 'Islands of War, Guardians of Memory: The Afterlife of the German Occupation in the British Channel Islands', in G. Carr and K. Reeves (ed.), *Heritage and Memory of War: Responses from Small Islands* (Abingdon, 2015) pp. 78-79

fact that around 6,000 Jerseymen served in the armed forces during the First World War – more than 860 of these listed as killed or M.I.A. – it is only in recent years that the full story of the ‘Jersey Pals’¹⁵⁵ has become publicly known. Indeed, Ronayne stated that ‘a search of local history shelves in the Public Library revealed nothing...on any aspect of Jersey in the First World War. It was as though written history had [leapt] from the Victorian era to the dark days of the Second World War’.¹⁵⁶

While it is not intended that this thesis should seek parallels between 1793-1815 and 1940-45, it should be noted that attempts to preserve an ‘authentic’ account of the Occupation mirror the debate which has long dominated the study of the counter-Revolution (see chapter nine). Within traditional historiography,¹⁵⁷ the royalist insurgency on both sides of the Loire has been presented as a source of ‘moral lessons’¹⁵⁸ and a sacred aspect of local cultural heritage.¹⁵⁹ During the nineteenth-century, hagiographical and polemical ‘histories’ of the counter-Revolution¹⁶⁰ popularised ‘short, simplistic discussions [of] atrocities and betrayals’,¹⁶¹ conflating documentary evidence of actual massacres¹⁶² with lurid urban myths.¹⁶³ Referring to modern treatments of the

¹⁵⁵ Deployed to the Western Front in 1915 as D Company, 7th (Service) Battalion, Royal Irish Rifles

¹⁵⁶ Ronayne, ‘Ours’, pp. 5 and 8

¹⁵⁷ A detailed overview of the pro-Royalist *Thèse Blanche* and pro-Republican *Thèse Bleue* may be found in P. Mann, ‘Les Insurrections Paysannes de l'Ouest: Vendée et Chouannerie’, *RFS* XXX (1989) 588-90

¹⁵⁸ O. Havard, *Histoire de la Révolution dans les Ports de Guerre* (Paris, 1913) cited in Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict*, p. 10

¹⁵⁹ S.L. Kaplan, *Farewell, Revolution: Disputed Legacies, France 1789/1989* (Ithaca, New York, 1995) pp. 39-40; and D. Sutherland, *The Chouans: The Social Origins of Popular Counter-Revolution in Upper Brittany, 1770-1796* (Oxford, 1982) p. 8

¹⁶⁰ See G.J. Hill, *The Story of the War in the Vendée and the Little Chouannerie* (New York, 1856)

¹⁶¹ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, pp. 7-8, 12-13

¹⁶² Carrier to the Committee of Public Safety, December 11th, 1793; Carrier to General Haxo, December 21st, 1793; and Carrier to the Committee of Public Safety, January 4th, 1794, all reproduced in E.H. Carrier (trans.), *Correspondence of Jean-Baptiste Carrier During His Mission in Brittany* (London, 1920) pp. 151, 169 and 193

¹⁶³ One such myth concerned the alleged practice of ‘Republican Marriage’, wherein two victims would be stripped naked, bound back-to-back, exposed to the elements in a boat, run through with a sword, then drowned. However, at Carrier’s trial, all references to the practice were struck from the court records.

subject, Bell has claimed that ‘the *Vendée* has divided the people of France like nothing else except Vichy’, and that the erection of memorials in the region may be considered akin to commemoration of the ‘Lost Cause’ in the former Confederate States.¹⁶⁴ Indeed, while Secher’s study of the destruction of one *Vendéan* village¹⁶⁵ has been described as ‘deeply controversial’, ‘incendiary’, ‘sloppily written’, and showing ‘little originality’,¹⁶⁶ it has inspired several campaigns to have the War in the Vendée designated as an act of genocide.¹⁶⁷

A Local Variant of ‘Nelsonian Mystique’?

Within recent scholarship, a number of attempts have been made to encourage a revisionist approach to the study of the naval conflict between Britain and France (see section ii). As highlighted by Davey, ‘Britain’s naval heritage has long been understood through the life and achievements of Nelson’, and ‘the remarkable allure of [her] greatest naval commander’ has all too often led historians to ignore the fact that the Royal Navy ‘produced many officers of considerable talent and skill’.¹⁶⁸ Le Fevre and Harding’s *British Admirals of the Napoleonic War*, for example, examines the careers of fourteen contemporaries of Nelson¹⁶⁹ whose contribution to the war at sea have been largely concealed beneath what Voelcker described as ‘the smothering blanket of Nelsonian mystique’.¹⁷⁰ In the case of Sir James Saumarez, the celebrated Guernseyman not only played a prominent role in the defence of the Channel Islands (see

¹⁶⁴ Bell, *The First Total War*, p. 157

¹⁶⁵ See R. Secher, G. Holoch (trans.), *A French Genocide: The Vendée* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 2003)

¹⁶⁶ See Bell, *The First Total War*, pp. 157-158; and M. Broers, ‘The Concept of ‘Total War’ in the Revolutionary-Napoleonic Period’, *WH* 15:3 (2008) 253

¹⁶⁷ H. Samuel, ‘Vendée French Call for Revolution Massacre to be Termed ‘Genocide’’, *Daily Telegraph*, December 26th 2008

¹⁶⁸ Davey, *In Nelson’s Wake*, p. 12

¹⁶⁹ See P. Le Fevre, and R. Harding, (eds.), *British Admirals of the Napoleonic Wars: The Contemporaries of Nelson* (London, 2005)

¹⁷⁰ T. Voelcker, *Saumarez vs. Napoleon: The Baltic, 1807-12* (Woodbridge, 2008) p. 22

above), but also fought alongside Nelson at Cape St. Vincent and the Nile, won a small but crucial victory at Algeciras in 1801, and was given command of the Baltic Fleet (1807-12).¹⁷¹ However, despite being celebrated as a hero – both in the Channel Islands and in Britain as a whole¹⁷² – it was not until 1831 that Saumarez was granted the honour to which he considered himself entitled,¹⁷³ being elevated to the peerage as the First Baron de Saumarez.

In the case of Algeciras, Saumarez' expectations of reward were certainly unrealistic – St. Vincent, for example, is described as having met his protests with 'astonished disdain'¹⁷⁴ – but it is clear nonetheless that the 'mystique' surrounding Nelson was cultivated largely by the man himself. After Cape St. Vincent, for example, the then-Commodore penned his own account of the battle for the benefit of the London papers, the accuracy of which was criticised – both in public and in private – by Admiral Parker.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, the official report from the Nile failed to acknowledge Saumarez as *de facto* second-in-command, while in a private letter to the Admiralty, Nelson refused to accept that Saumarez should receive any awards not also granted to Troubridge, who had run aground early in the action.¹⁷⁶ It is little surprise, therefore, that an 1802 edition of *The Naval Chronicle* should have decried 'that ill-judged and overweening popularity which tends to make a demigod of Lord Nelson at the

¹⁷¹ See D. Greenwood, 'James, Lord de Saumarez, 1757-1836', in Le Fevre and Harding (eds.), *British Admirals of the Napoleonic Wars*, pp. 245-270

¹⁷² Already knighted following his capture of the frigate *La Réunion* in 1793, Saumarez was created a baronet in 1801. After Algeciras, he received the Order of the Bath, a lifetime pension of £1,200 p/a and the Freedom of the City of London, as well as numerous honours bestowed by the States of Guernsey. See Lempriere, *History*, p. 141

¹⁷³ Voelcker, *Saumarez vs. Napoleon*, pp. 30-31, 40 and 56

¹⁷⁴ Greenwood, 'James, Lord de Saumarez, 1757-1836', pp. 260-261

¹⁷⁵ Shayer, *James Saumarez*, p. 47

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 67

expense of all other officers in the Service'.¹⁷⁷ Within the context of this thesis, however, it is proposed to adapt the concept of 'Nelsonian mystique' to the Channel Islands, and assess the extent to which the legacy enjoyed by the Lieutenant-Governors – particularly Don – may be regarded as having arisen out of their 'Nelsonesque' deification during the late nineteenth century.¹⁷⁸

In a more general sense, the 'immortalisation' of Don and Doyle can be seen to have contributed greatly to the narrative constructed by local historians with respect to the 'Great French War'. Just as the Battle of Jersey has been subject to a number of romanticised and exaggerated accounts,¹⁷⁹ so the Channel Islands are often portrayed within local scholarship as having served as a bulwark against an invasion of Britain's south coast. Coysh, for example, emphasises the fact that 'the Islands faced the full force of the Napoleonic Empire',¹⁸⁰ while Burke described the local privateering fleet as sufficiently strong as to be counted amongst 'the naval powers of the world'.¹⁸¹ Although in general agreement with the image of the Channel Islands as having constituted a series of fortified outposts on Britain's vulnerable maritime border, it is intended that this thesis shall reveal their involvement in military and naval affairs to be far more nuanced. Fundamentally, this means challenging the 'traditional' portrayal of Don and his colleagues as the driving force behind the provision of security against invasion,¹⁸² especially in relation to the fortification of the Islands (see chapter three). In particular, it shall be demonstrated that the

¹⁷⁷ J. Uglow, *In these Times: Living in Britain through Napoleon's Wars, 1793-1815* (London, 2014), cited in Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 12

¹⁷⁸ *Chronique de Jersey*, December 12th 1870, *British Press and Jersey Times*, February 2nd 1871, *Jersey Times*, December 7th 1780 and Anon, *Sonnet Number Two: On the Inauguration of a Commemorative Statue at St. Helier, Jersey; In Honour of General Sir George Don, Formerly Lt. Gov. and Originator of the Main Roads of the Island*, reproduced in *ABSJ* 1:8 (1885)

¹⁷⁹ E. Carey, *The Channel Islands* (London, 1924) pp. 123-125

¹⁸⁰ V. Coysh, *The Channel Islands: A New Study* (Newton Abbot, 1977) p. 77

¹⁸¹ J. Marr, *A History of the Bailiwick of Guernsey* (Guernsey, 1982) p. 153

¹⁸² See J. Sullivan, *General Don: An Episode on the History of Jersey* (Jersey, 1884)

celebrated achievements of the Lieutenant-Governors were often founded upon the plans of their predecessors,¹⁸³ and relied upon the support of less-celebrated colleagues.¹⁸⁴

The final area in which the shadow of 'mystique' may be identified is in relation to the figure of Philippe D'Auvergne, Prince de Bouillon: an officer who, in common with Saumarez, is regarded as having been wrongly overlooked by the gaze of history.¹⁸⁵ Within many accounts of the Channel Islands' role in the counter-Revolution, D'Auvergne has been accorded a position of primacy: Gabory, for example, described him as 'the channel through which passed almost all the funds intended for the *Chouannerie* and the Vendée'.¹⁸⁶ Likewise, both Balleine¹⁸⁷ and Ashelford¹⁸⁸ portray D'Auvergne as the driving force behind *La Correspondence* (see chapter nine), although their respective biographies of the Jersey spymaster may be better described using Black's concept of 'celebratory narrative'.¹⁸⁹ As with the mythologisation of Nelson, the prominence given to D'Auvergne within the context of Jersey's involvement in the counter-Revolution is understandable, since amongst local historians, he has become a focal point for the pride felt by Jerseymen in their maritime past. Indeed, King and Pocock have described his life as 'a most entertaining, readable, exciting,

¹⁸³ TNA, HO 98/3, Conway to Dundas, January 24th 1793 and 'Col. Craig, Memoir on the Defence of the Island of Jersey', 1793

¹⁸⁴ TNA, PC 1/3794, Don to Anon, 'Secret and Confidential', September 5th 1807

¹⁸⁵ D. Greenwood, 'James, Lord de Saumarez 1757-1836' in Le Fevre and Harding, (eds.), *British Admirals of the Napoleonic Wars*, p. 247

¹⁸⁶ E. Gabory, *L'Angleterre et la Vendée* (Paris, 1930) Vol. I, p. 174

¹⁸⁷ G.R. Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne: Vice-Admiral in the Royal Navy and the Last Duke of Bouillon*, (London, 1973) pp. 86-87

¹⁸⁸ J. Ashelford, *In the English Service: The Life of Philippe D'Auvergne* (Jersey, 2008) p. 63

¹⁸⁹ J. Black, *Rethinking Military History*, (London, 2004) pp. 27-28

romantic story’;¹⁹⁰ one which, were it not so well documented, would likely be dismissed as a work of fiction.¹⁹¹

Strategies for Engagement

In light of the preceding summary of the issues surrounding both the general historiography of the Channel Islands and that of some of the specific topics with which this thesis is concerned, it is evident that this thesis divides naturally into three distinct themes. The first theme, comprising the first half of the following investigation, shall focus upon the issue of the wartime security of the Channel Islands and their exploitation by the British government as a focal point for ‘power projection’.¹⁹² The second theme, building on the scholarship of Raban, Starkey and Crowhurst, focuses upon the Channel Islands’ privateering and smuggling trades, as well as their role as an auxiliary partner in the Royal Navy’s blockade of the Channel ports. The final strand of the investigation, being concerned with the Channel Islands’ dual role in both espionage and counter-Revolutionary activity,¹⁹³ is designed to expand upon a number of older works, locating the bailiwicks in the wider context of ‘covert warfare’.¹⁹⁴ More importantly, just as recent revisionist scholarship has attempted to provide a ‘demythologised’ portrait of Nelson, the final section of this thesis will provide an opportunity to adopt a similar approach to the traditional treatment of key figures such as D’Auvergne.

¹⁹⁰ See Pocock, ‘Review: *The Tragedy of Philippe D’Auvergne*’, 283

¹⁹¹ King, ‘The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists’, p. 222

¹⁹² Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, pp. xxix-xxx

¹⁹³ TNA, HO 98/3, Craig to Dundas, March 16th, March 20th and May 5th 1793, and Dundas to Craig, April 28th 1793

¹⁹⁴ A. Cobban, ‘The British Secret Service in France, 1784-1792’, *EHR*, 69:271 (1954) and ‘The Beginning of the Channel Islands’ Correspondence, 1789-1794’, *EHR*, 77:302 (1962)

Having thus given a broad overview of the intentions of this thesis, it would now seem appropriate to outline the manner in which each of the three strands of the investigation are to be explored, and to highlight the various limitations of each approach. However, in light of pre-existing scholarship, a general observation may first be made: namely that, as illustrated by King's aforementioned thesis, any of the several topics herein discussed could easily provide material for an entire doctorate.¹⁹⁵ As such, it must be emphasised that none of the following chapters purports to provide an exhaustive coverage of its central theme; rather, it is hoped to integrate each theme into an overarching narrative, and thus provide a comprehensive picture of the Channel Islands' role in the Great French War. Furthermore, while it has been possible to draw upon extensive archival material held both in the Channel Islands¹⁹⁶ and Great Britain,¹⁹⁷ funding has been insufficient to allow visits to either the *Service Historique de la Défense* or the *Archives Nationales*. As far as possible, this deficiency has been compensated for through the use of the latter depository's digitised archive, particularly in terms of the documentation which it holds relating to proposals for the invasion of the Channel Islands (see chapter three).

With respect to the appropriate restriction of the investigation of each topic according to time-frame, this is particularly relevant to the discussion of the role of the Channel Islands as a conduit for the transmission of British aid to the royalist insurgency (see chapter nine). As Buffinton asserts, the royalist movement was at its zenith during the period 1793-5, and enjoyed a position of dominance in the west and south of France only for as long as the Republicans

¹⁹⁵ King, 'The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists', Abstract

¹⁹⁶ Principally the States of Jersey Archives; the Guernsey Public Record Office; and the Priaux Library, Guernsey.

¹⁹⁷ The National Archives at Kew, The British Library, The National Maritime Museum, The Devon Heritage Centre and the Suffolk Record Office (Ipswich Branch)

remained 'inefficiently organised and commanded'.¹⁹⁸ This view has been reinforced by subsequent investigations: Sutherland and Tilly having concluded that 'any successes the [*chouans*] enjoyed were conditional upon external factors',¹⁹⁹ meaning that the execution of Charette in late March 1796 ended 'formal' royalist activity south of the Loire.²⁰⁰ Thereafter, the insurgency in the western provinces was almost exclusively guerrilla in character: a shift reflected both in Hoche's reports to his superiors,²⁰¹ and his issuing of the *Instruction for Those Troops Employed in Fighting the Chouans*.²⁰² However, *chouan* activity continued to destabilise the Western Provinces until 1808²⁰³ – thereby acting as a 'third column' in the region²⁰⁴ – the failure of the Pichegru/Cadoudal conspiracy in 1804 is generally regarded as having heralded the end of British interest in the insurgency (see chapter nine).²⁰⁵

The case for examining the relationship with the royalists beyond Knight's 'end-point' is founded upon the work of Ashelford: for all its romanticisation of D'Auvergne, it highlighted nonetheless the continued importance of the Channel Islands as an intelligence conduit.²⁰⁶ In particular, the regular passage of confidential agents between the Breton coast and Jersey ensured a steady supply of detailed information concerning enemy preparations at Cherbourg, Dislette, Carteret and Granville, as well as the re-deployment of enemy troops

¹⁹⁸ A.H. Buffinton, *The Second Hundred Years War, 1689-1815* (London, 1930) p. 84

¹⁹⁹ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, pp. 264-265

²⁰⁰ Tilly, *The Vendée*, p. 5

²⁰¹ M. Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution: Puisaye, the Princes and the British Government in the 1790s*, 2 Vols. (Cambridge, 1983) Vol. II. pp. 450-451

²⁰² L. Hoche, 'Instruction for those Troops Employed in Fighting the Chouans', reproduced in translation in J. North, 'General Hoche and Counter-Insurgency', *JMH* 67:2 (April 2003) 531-537

²⁰³ Gabory, *L'Angleterre et la Vendée*, Vol. I. p. 221

²⁰⁴ TNA, WO 1/923/99, D'Auvergne to Hutchkisson, February 4th 1800; WO 1/924/1, D'Auvergne to Hobart, January 25th 1802; and HO 69/16, 'Local Telegraphic Signals', March 2nd 1804

²⁰⁵ R. Knight, *Britain against Napoleon: Organisation of Victory, 1793-1815* (London, 2014) pp. 284-285

²⁰⁶ Ashelford, *In the English Service*, p. 115

to other theatres of war (see chapter eight).²⁰⁷ However, in spite of the potential value of such intelligence, D'Auvergne warned his superiors that *chouan* chiefs in London were encouraging these men to act in 'an irregular and insubordinate manner'.²⁰⁸ Consequently, upon the official reformation of *La Correspondence*, it was ordered that no royalists or *chouans* should be permitted to cross from Jersey to London without a formal application being made to the British government.²⁰⁹ Despite such restrictions, D'Auvergne's agents continued to provide the British Government with valuable information regarding Napoleon's overall strategy²¹⁰ and the redistribution of French manpower,²¹¹ while communication with the squadrons based in Guernsey Roads²¹² proved invaluable in the context of the decision to adopt a loose blockade of the French ports (see chapter seven).²¹³

As to the examination of the activities of the Channel Islands privateers, it is reasonable to allow this aspect of the thesis to span the entire period of the Great French War. As illustrated by Jamieson *et al*, legitimate maritime professions such as fishing, trading and privateering were carried out in tandem with the more underhand – but equally profitable – business of smuggling

²⁰⁷ *NMM*, COR/7, 'Continuation of the Last Communication Received from Brest', October 16th 1800; and COR/8, 'Extract of Intelligence from Captain D'Auvergne', January 31st 1801; and Y. Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent, Agent Clandestin du Parti Royaliste en Ille-et-Vilaine sous le Premier Empire (1808)', *ABPO*, 100:3 (1993) 315 and 330

²⁰⁸ *TNA*, WO 1/925/53, D'Auvergne to Shere, May 26th 1806; and WO 1/925/89, D'Auvergne to Shere, Oct 20th 1806

²⁰⁹ *TNA*, HO 99/3, Circular to Don and Doyle, September 17th 1807

²¹⁰ *TNA*, WO 1/925/73, D'Auvergne to Shere, September 16th 1806; *SJA*, L/F/95/A/25, 'Don to Doyle Concerning Intelligence Received from France Relating to Troop Movements, Vessels and the Emperor's Intention to Give Up His Journey to Italy and Focus on the Channel and Portugal', November 27th 1807

²¹¹ *SJA*, L/F/95/A/34, 'Don to Doyle Concerning French Movements and the Signal Station on Sark', March 7th 1808; and L/F/95/A/35, 'Don to Doyle Concerning the News from Spain, Signal Stations in Jersey and Sark, etc, July 2nd 1808'

²¹² *SJA*, L/F/106/A/2, Don to Dumaresq, August 15th 1806

²¹³ M. Duffy, 'The Establishment of the Western Squadron as the Linchpin of British Naval Strategy', in Duffy (ed.), *Parameters of British Naval Power 1650-1850* (Exeter, 1992) p. 78

woollens, wine, brandy and tobacco into Cornwall and Devon.²¹⁴ Consequently, the Islanders openly resisted the British government's attempts to bring the latter under control, submitting petitions against both the installation of customs agents and the unilateral extension of the Anti-Smuggling Acts of 1805 and 1807.²¹⁵ Ultimately, privateering and smuggling were regarded by many of the Islanders – not least those whose commercial interests lay in merchant shipping – as nothing more or less than a sensible alternative to their 'standard' peacetime occupations. As such, there was not a single year during the Great French War when the Channel Islands privateers were not actively engaged to a greater or lesser degree. Indeed, records of their activities – including value, number and frequency of prizes – have all survived in sufficient numbers in order for us to draw valid conclusions as regards their impact upon enemy commerce and trade.

Likewise, the bulk of extant scholarship on privateering in the Channel theatre during the Great French War sets a clear precedent for extending our coverage across the entire period. Crowhurst, for example, adopts this timeframe in all four of the works cited herein – including two which predate the publication of *A People of the Sea*²¹⁶ – as do Meyer, Podger and Saunders in their respective studies of local commerce raiding.²¹⁷ Furthermore, it is important not to overlook the above-mentioned research carried out by Raban, since although it is focused on the mid-eighteenth century rather than the Great French War, this nonetheless provides valuable context with respect to the earlier development

²¹⁴ See A.G. Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and Smuggling, 1680-1850' in Jamieson, (ed.), *A People of the Sea* pp. 213-216

²¹⁵ Carey, *The Channel Islands*, pp. 142-143

²¹⁶ P. Crowhurst, *Defence of British Trade, 1689-1815* (Folkestone, 1977); and 'The Profitability in French Privateering, 1793-1815', *BH*, 24:1 (1982) 48-60

²¹⁷ Meyer, 'Channel Islands Privateers', pp. 180-184; A. Podger, '*Jersey – that Nest of Vypers*': *But Were We?* (Jersey, 2007); and A.C. Saunders, 'The Corsairs of Jersey', *ABSJ* 11:3 (1930) 232-244

of the Channel Islands privateers. Indeed, while it would be inappropriate to recount in detail the role of the local commerce raiders in earlier conflicts, Raban's research highlights an important caveat which must be borne in mind when assessing the impact of privateering on the war at sea. While many of the privateers operating out of British and French ports were armed merchantmen whose captains were empowered by letter-of-marque to make *opportunistic* captures, a far greater proportion of Channel Island vessels were smaller craft intended *specifically* to engage in commerce raiding (see chapter six).

As for the most appropriate timeframe for the examination of the various issues which are to be examined under the umbrella of the Channel Islands as fortified outposts, a degree of differentiation must be employed. For example, while the first decade of hostilities was dominated by the need to improve the combat effectiveness of the militia,²¹⁸ and those to bolster the defence of the Islands spanned the entire period,²¹⁹ the modernisation of the local roads was confined to the years following the Peace of Amiens.²²⁰ Even with military improvements having been initiated during the earliest years of the war, it is unavoidable that the majority of the attention of this section shall fall upon the period 1806-15, this period having been characterised by the greatest degree of concert between the local commanders.²²¹ However, it must also be noted that this aspect of the investigation shall also embrace several of the issues which were hinted at within the discussion of the Islands' demography and political

²¹⁸ TNA, HO 98/5, Dundas to Conway, February 7th 1794; SJA, L/F/08/A/32, 'Order from HQ, Guernsey, Order to Arms to Defend This Important and Valuable Post', April 5th 1795; and L/F/08/A/35, Thomas Saumarez to Col. Goselin, Commander of the North Regt. of Militia, June 2nd 1796

²¹⁹ SJA, L/F/103/A/1, 'Recommendation in Relation to the Building of a Tower at La Rocco', Undated; and L/F/22/E/39, 'Printed Letter to the Inhabitants of the Vigntaine de la Ville re. the Fortification of Town Hill', March 6th 1805

²²⁰ Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 13-1P4

²²¹ SJA, L/F/95/B/8, 'Letter from Don to 'My Dear Sir' Concerning the Movement of Troops in Normandy and the Garrison of Cherbourg', September 29th 1811; and L/F/95/B/9, Don to 'My Dear Sir', October 27th 1811

environment. As outlined above, there remained considerable differences between the bailiwicks in terms of their political and social structure, consequently, it shall be necessary to approach this aspect of the following examination by treating each as a separate entity.

Notes on Key Sources

Before commencing with the investigation, it shall be useful to highlight the most important primary material with which the thesis seeks to engage, and the sections to which they are most relevant. With respect to the main thrust of this thesis – namely the fortification of the Channel Islands and their transformation into the ‘Gibraltar of the Channel’ – the bulk of primary research material will be drawn from local archival sources and from a variety of collections at The National Archives. Not only do these provide access to official correspondence between the respective military commanders and their superiors at the War Office and Home Office, but the local archives are particularly useful in that they hold records which reveal the direct impact of the fortification of the Channel Islands upon the civilian population.²²² As for the efforts made to improve the efficiency of the Islands’ militia forces, the Jersey Archives reveal an especially important source. The sole-surviving ‘militia letter book’ of Sir John Le Couteur presents a highly detailed record of the reform of the Jersey Militia between 1799 and 1804,²²³ offering vital evidence in support of the view that the success of Don and Doyle owed much to the efforts of their less well-known and less-celebrated predecessors.

²²² SJA, L/F/22/E/25, ‘List of Subscribers to the Works on the Town Hill and Account with the *Connétable*’, 1803-04

²²³ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, ‘Militia Letter Book of J. Le Couteur, October 1799 to October 1804’

Similarly, although the examination of the Channel Islands' involvement in the war at sea will make extensive use of the material held in London – particularly the Admiralty records – a number of valuable supplementary sources will be provided by local archives. In terms of the activities of the local privateers, the surviving minutes of the Jersey Chamber of Commerce will be of considerable value,²²⁴ as shall the records of local merchants such as Carteret Priaulx, now held at the Priaulx Library, Guernsey. Such material will provide much-needed context for data already compiled by Crowhurst and Starkey,²²⁵ allowing for the engagement in a comparative study of the activities of the Channel Island privateers. Not only will it be possible to assess the effectiveness of their operations in relation to those vessels based in English ports, but comparisons will also be made possible with the Breton and Norman *corsairs*. As for the role of the Channel Islands as a support for the Royal Navy's blockade war, primary material within the local archives is much more limited. However, this is compensated for by material held in the National Maritime Archive, Greenwich, as well as a large number of dispatches and letters already published in secondary literature.²²⁶

Finally, in terms of the existent primary material in support of the investigation into the 'covert war' element of our study, this is largely shared between local and national collections. This is particularly true in the case of the Channel Islands' role as a base for espionage and intelligence gathering, since the majority of the actual reports generated by D'Auvergne during his command of

²²⁴ SJA, L/A/38/A1/2-3, 'Minutes of the Chamber of Commerce, 1785-1826'

²²⁵ See Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade* and Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise*

²²⁶ See Sir J. Ross, *Memoirs and Correspondence of Admiral Lord De Saumarez*, 2 Vols. (London, 1838); J. Leyland (ed.), *Dispatches and Letters Relating to the Blockade of Brest, 1803-1805*, 2 Vols. (London, 1902); and R. Morriss, *The Channel Fleet and the Blockade of Brest, 1793-1801* (Aldershot, 2001)

La Correspondance in Jersey have survived in *TNA*.²²⁷ By contrast, the material held in the *SJA* mainly deals with subsidiary documentation generated as a result of these reports, and shall be used primarily to illustrate effect of D'Auvergne's activities at the local level.²²⁸ A similar situation exists in relation to the Channel Islands' involvement with the counter-Revolution, since the material held in the local archives concerns only the very early days of the War, specifically the year 1793.²²⁹ By contrast, *TNA* holds a vast collection of official reports submitted by D'Auvergne to the Privy Council, War Office, Foreign Office and Home Office, as well as much of his private correspondence, and this is supplemented by a good deal of material held at the British Library.

²²⁷ See WO 1/920 Series (Intelligence, Prince de Bouillon) and PC 1/115-122 (Papers of the Prince de Bouillon – Secret Correspondence)

²²⁸ *SJA*, L/F/106/A/1, Gordon to Townshend, April 21st 1797; L/F/95/A/25, Don to Doyle, November 27th 1807 and L/F/95/B/8, Don to 'My Dear Sir', September 29th 1811

²²⁹ *SJA*, L/F/08/A/11, 'Intelligence from Cherbourg Addressed to Dundas', November 27th 1793; and L/F/08/A/14, 'Balcarres to Dundas Regarding the Situation in France', December 2nd 1793

Section I – The Development of the Channel Islands as a Military Stronghold

Chapter Two – Manpower, Training and Efficiency

Referring to the British Army during the 1780s, Glover has argued that, while it may be possible to identify a number of good officers and competent regiments, 'it may still be questioned whether taxpayers ever supported a more useless body of men'.²³⁰ As for the force which existed during the 1790s – particularly that deployed to Den Helder in 1799²³¹ – Bartlett has described it as having been plagued by 'obvious shortcomings', deficient in leadership, training, supply and transportation', and rife with disease.²³² While it may be imagined that troops posted to the Channel Islands – being mainly concerned with garrison duties – remained isolated from many of these issues, the reality is that both the regular troops and local militiamen shared in almost all of the hardships facing their counterparts on the 'front line'. Moreover, as emphasised by the respective Lieutenant-Governors, the Channel Islands were far from being insignificant 'sugar islands' to be filched as bargaining chips;²³³ indeed, they were ideally positioned so as to exert control over the enemy's regional mercantile traffic (see section ii). Small's reports as Lieutenant-Governor of Guernsey typified this view, outlining as they did his intention that the troops and inhabitants might employ 'mutual and animated efforts' to 'secure tenaciously the possession of this important territory to its lawful sovereign'.²³⁴

²³⁰ R. Glover, *Peninsular Preparation: Reform of the British Army, 1795-1809* (Cambridge, 1963) p. 118

²³¹ C.J. Fedorak, 'In Defence of Great Britain': Henry Addington, the Duke of York and Military Preparations against Invasion by Napoleonic France, 1803-04', in M. Philp (ed.), *Resisting Napoleon: The British Response to the Threat of Invasion, 1797-1815* (Aldershot, 2006) p. 94

²³² K.J. Bartlett, 'The Development of the British Army during the Wars with France, 1793-1815' PhD Thesis, (University of Durham, 1998) pp. 10 and 22

²³³ Harling, 'A Tale of Two Conflicts', p. 19

²³⁴ TNA, WO 1/604, Small to Dundas, January 9th 1796; Small to D'Auvergne, January 21st 1796

Therefore, as well as demonstrating the success with which the local authorities dealt with the abovementioned deficiencies, this chapter will also investigate the means by which they moulded their disparate troops into an efficient combined-arms corps. Prior to 1796, the organisation of the defence of the Channel Islands was undermined by a rapid turnover in personnel: between 1793 and 1796, five men served as Lieutenant-Governor of Guernsey, while Jersey came under four different Commanders-in-Chief (see appendix b). By contrast, the appointment of Gordon and Small as ‘Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief’ of their respective bailiwicks heralded a period of considerable stability; indeed, Gordon’s sudden death in 1806 – though mourned by the troops under his command²³⁵ – did not disrupt improvements to the local defenses (see chapters three and four). However, in spite of their fiercely-guarded constitutional freedoms,²³⁶ the Channel Islands remained within the British sphere of influence; consequently, the innovations and reforms that became a feature of local military life during the Great French War mirrored broader changes within British military culture.²³⁷ Indeed, since the Lieutenant-Governors were invariably ‘career’ officers²³⁸ – many with experience of garrison service²³⁹ – they were able to draw upon a wealth of practical experience as well as abstract knowledge of developments in military theory.

Estimating the Islands’ Manpower – The Militia

As with many aspects of Channel Islands life, the origins of the local militia can be traced back to at least the medieval period. During the reign of Edward III,

²³⁵ TNA, HO 98/11, Mjr-Gen. Johnson to Spencer, April 22nd 1806

²³⁶ J. Linden, *Anecdotes Relative to the Island of Jersey* (London, 1773) p. 21

²³⁷ Bartlett, ‘The Development of the British Army’, Abstract

²³⁸ W. Davies, *Coastal Towers of Jersey* (Jersey, 1991) pp. 47-48

²³⁹ Don, for example, had commanded the 59th Regiment in Jersey during 1792-93

the 'Warden of the Islands' – an archaic title for the Governor²⁴⁰ – had been empowered to mobilise 'all men capable of bearing arms', and lead them personally into battle against any invader.²⁴¹ Despite various modifications, the spirit of this order had endured throughout the centuries, and although the late eighteenth-century militiaman was – in terms of outward appearance – radically different to his medieval forebears, the laws and traditions underpinning his service were broadly similar. For example, the original order given by Edward III was echoed in an Order in Council of April 22nd 1778: the Governor, his Lieutenant, or the *de facto* Commanding Officer being granted the power to embody both the militia and artillery 'for the benefit of the service'.²⁴² In addition, Jersey's 'Code of 1771' had reaffirmed the practice of weekly militia drill for every native male aged thirteen or over,²⁴³ the 'active force' being composed of those aged between seventeen and sixty-five.²⁴⁴ However, it should be noted that the concept of a 'militia reserve' was not proposed until the latter half of the nineteenth century, when men between the ages of thirty-three and forty-five were permitted to request exemption from general service.²⁴⁵

On paper, the strength of the local militia appears considerable: in early 1793, the official returns for Jersey listed 3,844 men – including 1,309 'line infantry, light infantry and grenadiers' and 298 artillerymen²⁴⁶ – while in 1800 returns or Guernsey listed 3,158 men and 445 lads.²⁴⁷ However, in spite of the relatively

²⁴⁰ TNA, FO 95/605/26, D'Auvergne to Windham, October 5th 1795

²⁴¹ Balleine, *A History of the Island of Jersey*, p. 59

²⁴² A.J. Le Cras, *The Laws, Customs and Privileges, and Their Administration in the Island of Jersey, with Notices on Guernsey* (London, 1839) p. 266

²⁴³ Recruits aged between thirteen and seventeen were referred to in the Militia Law as 'Boys' or 'Lads'. They drilled with the parochial regiments but were not expected to fight in the 'Line'.

²⁴⁴ Le Couteur to Don, May 27th 1806, reproduced in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 41-43

²⁴⁵ *The New Militia Law*, reproduced in translation in *TGJM* 3 (October, 1875)

²⁴⁶ TNA, HO 98/3, Return of the Jersey Militia, January 24th 1793

²⁴⁷ J. Duncan, *A History of Guernsey: With Occasional Notices of Jersey, Alderney and Sark, and Biographical Sketches* (London, 1841) p. 248

small numbers involved, contemporary estimates for the strength of the Channel Islands' militias can be considered as no more accurate than those drawn up for the regulars and auxiliaries.²⁴⁸ Although a number of censuses appear to have been carried out during the eighteenth century, none has survived in its entirety, and even in the better-preserved examples, the information provided is often haphazard.²⁴⁹ Ultimately, reliable census data is available only from the latter part of the period under investigation, Island-wide 'military' censuses having been conducted under the superintendence of Don and Doyle in 1806 and 1815.²⁵⁰ Moreover, it must be emphasised that the abovementioned figures provide only the 'paper' strength of the militia: by contrast, official correspondence reveals that the number of 'effectives' in each force was much lower. For example, it was revealed that the authorities in Jersey were able to call upon no more than 1,825 militiamen in 1793²⁵¹ and 1,700 in 1797,²⁵² while even in 1807, Guernsey's militia could count on 'only about 2,000 men.'²⁵³

In spite of this apparently significant difference between their 'paper' and 'actual' strength, the true impact of such a disparity may be only truly seen by judging the Channel Islands militia against its contemporaries. As has been already highlighted, the inhabitants were compelled by law to render military service, a form of *de facto* conscription which was then unknown in any other part of the British Isles. However, while individual militiamen can be seen to have treated

²⁴⁸ TNA, WO 34/115/14, 'Plans for the Defence of England', cited in A.T. Patterson, *The Other Armada: The Franco-Spanish Attempt to Invade Britain in 1779* (Manchester, 1960) p. 108

²⁴⁹ M.L. Backhurst, *Tracing Your Channel Islands' Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians* (Barnsley, 2011) p. 27

²⁵⁰ Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port' p. 48; and SJA, L/F/95/C/1, 'Copy of General Don's Military Census, Parish by Parish, *Vingtaine* by *Vingtaine*', 1806

²⁵¹ TNA, HO 98/24, Brown to Dundas, January 17th 1793

²⁵² TNA, WO 1/604, Dalrymple to Dundas, April 20th 1797

²⁵³ 'General Don's Report on the Island of Jersey', November 16th, 1807, reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 47-48

this obligation with deep solemnity (see chapter five), the fact remains that the force existed only as a part-time body, and thus remained – like the British volunteers, an essentially ‘civilian’ force.²⁵⁴ While service in the militia was viewed as a fundamental aspect of the Channel Islanders’ patriotic duty to their ‘Duke’, this was often treated as being secondary in importance to the demands of local agriculture.²⁵⁵ Likewise, the inhabitants’ dependence on the sea was acknowledged as the cause of an even greater drain upon the militia’s actual manpower; the number of seafaring men in the ranks leading to ‘an almost daily fluctuation’ in drill attendance.²⁵⁶ For example, the Jersey returns of January 1793 reveal that of the 1,155 ‘mariners’ then serving in the ranks, 634 had been granted leave in order to go to sea,²⁵⁷ while 519 men are listed as having ‘gone to sea’ in March 1803.²⁵⁸

While it is likely that a significant proportion of the militiamen thus absent from drill would have been engaged in the local fishing industry, it must also be noted that local privateering ventures also absorbed a large number of these ‘mariners’.²⁵⁹ Though many of the larger vessels sent out by the more prominent local merchants may have been manned by multi-national crews, the vast majority of privateers were small craft, and likely crewed exclusively by ‘natives’ (see chapter six). In addition, the Channel Islands’ status as a free port enabled trade with both neutral and enemy states to be carried on far more openly than in the remainder of the British Isles,²⁶⁰ while industries such as the

²⁵⁴ J.E. Cookson, *The British Armed Nation, 1793-1815* (Oxford, 1997) p. 80

²⁵⁵ Morieux, *The Channel*, pp. 329-330

²⁵⁶ TNA, HO 98/24, Brown to Dundas, January 17th 1793

²⁵⁷ TNA, HO 98/3, Return of the Jersey Militia, January 24th 1793

²⁵⁸ TNA, HO 98/9, ‘General Return of the Jersey Militia’, March 1803

²⁵⁹ TNA, WO 1/607, States of Jersey to Dundas, May 1st 1798

²⁶⁰ Crossan, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 11

trans-Atlantic cod trade continued to prosper until at least 1800.²⁶¹ According to the Chamber of Commerce, more than 1,500 Jersey men were involved in this venture, over half of whom remained in Newfoundland during the summer months, and were thus absent from Jersey for up to half the year.²⁶² Moreover, both the steady decline of Guernsey's investment in the Gaspé fisheries²⁶³ and the threat of competition from the French colony of St. Pierre and Miquelon²⁶⁴ served to stimulate further investment. This is demonstrated by the fact that by 1807, the number of mariners absent from militia drill at any one time had reached a peak figure of between 700 and 800 men,²⁶⁵ and even by 1811, remained above 600 men.²⁶⁶

However, in spite of the abovementioned disparity between 'paper' and 'effective' strength, the situation in the Channel Islands compares favourably with that in other British bases of the period. In Malta, for example, General Pigot was first given permission to raise a voluntary militia force in 1801, yet out of a civilian population²⁶⁷ of around 96,500,²⁶⁸ barely 600 men could be induced to join the ranks.²⁶⁹ Similarly, although the population of Sicily – excluding Palermo – already exceeded 1.3 million, a British-sponsored effort to form a militia corps in 1809 struggled to attract more than 1,500 men from outside the capital.²⁷⁰ Even basing the calculations on 'actual' rather than 'paper' strength,

²⁶¹ SJA, L/A/38/A1, Entry for August 30th 1800

²⁶² TNA, HO 69/17/16, 'Petition by the Chamber of Commerce to the States of Jersey', March 7th 1795

²⁶³ Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port', p. 140

²⁶⁴ C.R. Fay, *Channel Islands and Newfoundland: Continuing the Author's 'Life and Labour in Newfoundland'* (Cambridge, 1961) p. 26

²⁶⁵ General Don's Report on the Island of Jersey, November 16th 1807', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 47-48

²⁶⁶ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of February 10th 1811

²⁶⁷ Exclusive of 17,500 Members of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem

²⁶⁸ C. Savona-Ventura, 'War and Population Change in the Maltese Context', *MMJ* 18:2 (2006) 36

²⁶⁹ Gregory, *Malta*, p. 267

²⁷⁰ D. Gregory, *Sicily, the Insecure Base: The History of the British Occupation, 1806-1815* (London, 1988) pp. 39 and 47

and taking into account that the latter two forces relied on voluntary, not compulsory enlistment, both bailiwicks can be seen to have compared favourably to their Mediterranean counterparts. This was especially true of Jersey, where the actual strength of the militia represented 8.75% of the population,²⁷¹ compared to figures of just 0.8% for the Maltese and 0.1% for the Sicilian militias.²⁷² Only Madeira may be seen as having eclipsed them: in 1801, soon after the British assumed responsibility for its defence, the island's defence force was found to include 15,000 'well-trained, excellent [militiamen]', or 23% of the local population.²⁷³

Closer to home, it may also be seen that the Channel Islands' militias compared favourably to the bench-mark set by Britain, whose 'home defence' needs were met by an unwieldy mixture of compulsion and volunteering. Certainly, the greatest difficulties arose from the volunteers and the yeomanry: not simply because of their widely-assumed 'dubious levels of commitment',²⁷⁴ but also due to the fact that both forces more than doubled in size – to 116,000 men and 22,600 men respectively – in response to the 1798 invasion scare.²⁷⁵ It must also be remembered that many of the volunteers refused to commit to anything more than the defence of their own neighbourhood,²⁷⁶ and that the 130,000 men of the militia and fencibles also frequently resisted government organisation initiatives, especially at the local level.²⁷⁷ Moreover, the promulgation of the Militia Act was attended by disorder in a number of

²⁷¹ This is based on an estimated 'active' Militia strength of 2,000 men and an estimated civilian population of 22,855 souls, the latter being the figure recorded in Jersey's 1806 Census.

²⁷² Note: Gregory does not provide any figures for levels of militia recruitment amongst the 'urban' inhabitants of the Island.

²⁷³ D. Gregory, *The Beneficent Usurpers, A History of the British in Madeira* (London, 1988) p. 48

²⁷⁴ Bartlett, 'The Development of the British Army', p. 122

²⁷⁵ Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p. 70

²⁷⁶ See 'The Bank of England Volunteers', in A. Gee, *The British Volunteer Movement, 1794-1814* (Oxford, 2003) p. 77

²⁷⁷ Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p. 68

localities: confusion over the terms of service gave rise to rioting, and radicals attempted to exploit such disturbances for political gain (see chapter five).²⁷⁸ By the summer of 1798, the whole force amounted to 268,600 men, or 2.26% of the population: however, it must be remembered that the British militia – unlike the Channel Islands' force – also functioned as a direct 'recruiting service'²⁷⁹ for the regular army.²⁸⁰

Estimating the Islands' Manpower – The Regulars

While Craig was by no means alone in acknowledging the efforts made by the local authorities to produce 'a well-ordered militia, capable alone of defeating any enemy',²⁸¹ the 'backbone' of the local defensive force was provided by a dedicated force of regular troops. For example, following the collapse of the planned French invasion of Jersey (see chapter three), the 'paper strength' of the garrison was increased from approximately 1,900 men²⁸² to 4,366 men, of whom 3,967 were considered fit for 'active service'.²⁸³ To put this in some form of context, this latter figure was more than double the size of the garrison of Jersey at the time of de Rullecourt's attempt to capture the island in 1781,²⁸⁴ although it should be noted that this expansion was not sustained. Over the following years, the number of regulars stationed in the Channel Islands was, like the militia establishment, prone to fluctuation; either because of a perceived lessening of the immediacy of the enemy threat (see chapter three), or because

²⁷⁸ J.R. Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century; the Story of a Political Issue, 1660-1802* (London, 1965) pp. 290-291 and 301-302

²⁷⁹ In 1808, 27,505 British Militiamen transferred to the Regular Army.

²⁸⁰ C.D. Hall, *British Strategy in the Napoleonic War, 1803-15*, (Manchester, 1992) pp. 1, 5-6

²⁸¹ TNA, HO 98/3, Report on the State of the Jersey Militia, March 15th 1793

²⁸² SJA, L/F/97/M2/39, De Carteret, *Greffier*, to *The Times*, March 15th 1794

²⁸³ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, 'Returns for the Garrison of the Island of Jersey', April 1st, 1796

²⁸⁴ L. Downie and D. Ford, *1781: The Battle of Jersey* (Jersey, 2012) p. 16 and Tupper, *History of Guernsey*, p. 414

troops were needed more urgently in other areas.²⁸⁵ For example, the returns of January 1795 record 2,270 regulars as either on active duty, in quarters or in hospital; while the recruiting parties which arrived soon after included 'a number of old, infirm and diseased men' who, if they could not be incorporated into the invalids (see below), were to be returned to England.²⁸⁶

Even taking account of the problems of injury and disease, a comparison with contemporary bases in the Mediterranean reveals that the Channel Islands were, once again, in a favourable position. For example, successive British commanders had expressed the opinion that the defence of Malta could be assured only by a force of approximately 10,000 troops, yet the entire garrison between 1801 to 1815 never significantly exceeded 4,000 men.²⁸⁷ Similarly, although the arrival in 1799 of two weakened Irish regiments and three British regiments from Portugal was to raise the garrison of Minorca to a wartime peak of 6,500 men, Fox would later complain that only 3,500 men could truly be relied upon.²⁸⁸ Even Sicily – defended by a garrison of at least 14,000 men in 1807 – was regarded as being 12,000 troops short of the number required for guaranteed security,²⁸⁹ while the second occupation of Madeira (1807-1814) involved a British force of only 3,600 men.²⁹⁰ However, the Channel Islands also proved superior in relation to the quality of their senior officers: in contrast to the experience possessed by Gordon, Don and Doyle,²⁹¹ Gregory's study

²⁸⁵ TNA, WO 1/607, Dundas to Gordon, May 5th 1797; Gordon to Dundas, May 6th 1797; and Dundas to Gordon, June 5th 1798

²⁸⁶ TNA, WO 1/603, 'Return of HM Forces Guernsey', January 1st 1795; and 'Return of the Drafts Arrived from Chatham', January 2nd 1795

²⁸⁷ Gregory, *Malta*, pp. 266-267

²⁸⁸ D. Gregory, *Minorca: The Illusory Prize, A History of the British Occupations of Minorca between 1708 and 1802* (London, 1990) pp. 201-204

²⁸⁹ Gregory, *Sicily*, p. 48

²⁹⁰ Gregory, *Beneficent Usurpers*, p. 55

²⁹¹ All three began their military careers during the American War of Independence: Gordon as a Lieutenant; Don and Doyle as Ensigns.

highlighted that Bourcard²⁹² 'never once [left] Palermo and knew nothing of [Sicily's] resources', while Guillichini²⁹³ was 'ignorant of military matters' and 'quite unsuited to command'.²⁹⁴

In addition to a strong 'core' of truly 'regular' troops, it must be remembered that the vast majority of garrisons also included a variety of auxiliaries which might be called upon in the event of invasion. In both Jersey and Guernsey, this force was chiefly comprised of 'invalids'; men who – in company with units such as the 3rd Royal Veterans Battalion – were charged with 'manning the coastal towers and batteries'.²⁹⁵ According to the above-mentioned garrison returns, Jersey's invalid regiments in 1796 included 753 men (with sixteen wanting for completion),²⁹⁶ while during the previous year, the establishment for Guernsey had been raised to 518 men (with fifty-three wanting for completion).²⁹⁷ As for the various 'foreign' regiments which were stationed in the Channel Islands at different points of the War,²⁹⁸ these will be properly investigated in relation to issues of public order (see chapter five), since they were not formally included within the garrison itself. However, it should be emphasised that none of these 'supernumerary' forces exhibited the deep-rooted indiscipline observed in traditional mercenary corps; in Minorca, for example, the Spanish garrison of 1798 included 1,500 Swiss-Germans, of whom 600 defected to the British.²⁹⁹

²⁹² Bourcard was a Swiss officer and held command of Sicily for two years prior to the British arrival.

²⁹³ An ex-naval captain from Tuscany, Guillichini held command of the fortress of Messina.

²⁹⁴ Gregory, *Sicily*, p. 30

²⁹⁵ *SJA*, A/A1/1, Letter of April 26th 1808

²⁹⁶ *SJA*, L/F/106/A/1, 'Returns for the Garrison of the Island of Jersey', April 1st 1796

²⁹⁷ *TNA*, WO 1/603, 'Return of HM Forces Guernsey', January 1st 1795

²⁹⁸ *SJA*, L/C/68/A/1, 'Circulars from Le Couteur to the *Connétables*', May 18th 1803 and November 16th 1803

²⁹⁹ Gregory, *Minorca*, pp. 198-200

An Illusion of Security – Disruption within the Island Garrisons and Militia

However, while it is clear that the mid-1790s found the Channel Islands in a comparatively strong position in terms of raw manpower, the experiences of the local population during the American War of Independence had given rise to a potentially fatal sense of overconfidence. Taken at face value, the two attempts which had been made to capture Jersey during 1779-81 had given the impression that the island was all but impervious to anything short of a combined assault with infantry, artillery and naval forces.³⁰⁰ In 1779, for example, the Prince of Nassau-Siegen had attempted to land at St. Ouen's Bay, but his naval escort had been unable to get close enough inshore to support the disembarkation, and the assault was easily repulsed by a combination of artillery fire and musketry.³⁰¹ As for De Rullecourt's invasion in 1781, this had been rather more successful – the French having gained control of St Helier and obtained the formal surrender of the Island³⁰² – but neither Major Peirson nor Captain Mulcaster³⁰³ had accepted the terms. The resultant Battle of Jersey – in which both Peirson and De Rullecourt were killed – had been won by the British troops in less than an hour, and at the cost of less than eighty-five casualties, while the French had lost seventy-eight killed, seventy-four wounded, and 417 made prisoner.³⁰⁴

³⁰⁰ As will be demonstrated in chapter five, the Channel Islands were, until the construction of the military roads, almost wholly unsuited to the use of cavalry.

³⁰¹ Holland Rose, Meyrick Broadley (eds.), *Dumouriez and the Defence of England*, p. 323; Moses Corbet to the Viscount Weymouth, *The London Gazette*, May 4th, 1779

³⁰² Lt.-Col. W.C. Rochfort, *The Invasion of the Island of Jersey: Together with the Proceedings and Sentence of the Court-Martial held on Major Corbet, the Lieutenant-Governor* (Jersey, 1852) pp. 9-13

³⁰³ Respectively Commanding Officer, 95th (Derbyshire) Regiment of Foot and OCRE (Island of Jersey)

³⁰⁴ Official Report on the Battle of Jersey, *The London Gazette*, January 16th, 1781; and Downie and Ford, *1781: The Battle of Jersey*, p. 30

In light of the apparent precedent set by these events, and boosted by reinforcements received from Britain (see below), the authorities in the Channel Islands had responded to reports of a planned French attack by declaring their intention to give any such attempt 'a proper reception'.³⁰⁵ Even so, they were by no means blind to deficiencies amongst the regulars: both in terms of general breakdowns in discipline (see below),³⁰⁶ and the ever-present problem of desertion.³⁰⁷ Though incomplete, the records of the Lieutenant-Governors certainly indicate a steady rate of attrition: the period January 1802 to May 1803 saw at least seven cases of desertion,³⁰⁸ while at least twelve occurred between January 1807 and February 1811.³⁰⁹ Included in this latter figure are two instances of mass desertion in early 1808: eight men of the 67th Regt. of Foot having fled from Guernsey,³¹⁰ and an unspecified number of men having deserted the Jersey garrison.³¹¹ Most troublesome, however, was the 2nd/60th Regt. of Foot: a corps formed largely from French deserters and prisoners of war³¹² which was sent to Jersey in October 1807,³¹³ and on return from the Peninsula, was posted to Guernsey. As Schwanenfeld highlights, officers in this battalion³¹⁴ employed an especially brutal system of punishment,³¹⁵ and after only two months, Doyle declared himself 'embarrassed' to report that twenty-three men had deserted.³¹⁶

³⁰⁵ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, 'Intelligence Reports on French Activities', undated, 1794

³⁰⁶ TNA, PC 1/3418, 'Petition Against the Behaviour and for the Withdrawal of the 8th Regt. of Foot', undated, 1792

³⁰⁷ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 7

³⁰⁸ SJA, A/C1/1, General Orders of June 1st 1802, December 12th 1802 and May 15th 1803

³⁰⁹ SJA, A/A1/2, Letters of January 27th 1807 and March 26th 1808; A/A1/4, Letter of February 21st 1811; A/A1/5, Letter of March 4th 1812; A/A5/2, Letters of October 22nd 1808, June 16th 1809 and July (undated), 1809; and A/A1/3, Letter of January 23rd 1810

³¹⁰ GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letters of March 5th and March 6th 1808

³¹¹ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of May 1st 1808

³¹² GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letter of September 8th 1809

³¹³ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of October 9th 1807

³¹⁴ He mistakenly refers to the 8th/60th Regt. of Foot

³¹⁵ S. Schwanenfeld, 'The Foundation of British Strength: National Identity and the British Common Soldier' PhD Thesis, (Florida State University, 2007) p. 89

³¹⁶ GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letters of July 6th and September 8th 1809

Although the local inhabitants occasionally proved willing to assist individual deserters in evading the military authorities (see chapter five), large-scale breakdowns in control encouraged no such reaction. Indeed, at the start of the Great French War, many Guernseymen could still recall the events of 1783, when a number of ‘disenchanted’ men of the 83rd Regt. of Foot, freshly arrived from southern England, had incited around 500 men of the 104th Regt. of Foot to mutiny.³¹⁷ While this outbreak appears to have been unique in the history of the Channel Islands, the mass expansion of the local garrisons in 1793-4 appears to have resulted in a dramatic increase of ‘low level’ acts of indiscipline within the garrison. In Jersey, a captain, sergeant and three privates of the 70th Regt. of Foot were convicted of ‘unsoldierly conduct’,³¹⁸ while in Guernsey, Lieutenant Thompson of the Dumbarton Fencibles and another officer were both found guilty of similar offences.³¹⁹ In addition, the local officer corps can be seen to have been troubled by a number of violent altercations: between 1793 and 1799, at least three officers were killed in duels;³²⁰ Ensign Blood of the 2nd/18th Regt. of Foot was cashiered for brawling;³²¹ and Sergeant-Major Calden and Lieutenant Denham were both convicted of insulting their superiors.³²²

In addition to disruption caused by military indiscipline, it must be remembered that the regular troops of the Channel Islands’ garrison – in common with the army as a whole – consisted of men who were more than willing to extract their

³¹⁷ Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, pp. 161-164 and Tupper, *The History of Guernsey*, pp. 378-380 [Both copied extensively from *The European Magazine and London Review Vol. 3* (London 1793) p. 393]

³¹⁸ *SJA*, A/C1/1, General Orders of March 2nd, June 4th and August 16th 1802

³¹⁹ *GSG*, De Saumarez Collection, VIII 2, General Court-Marital, June 6th 1796 and Regimental Court-Martial, September 18th 1804

³²⁰ *TNA*, WO 1/603, Small to Amherst, February 14th 1795; and *The Times*, November 15th 1796 and April 8th 1799

³²¹ *The Times*, July 24th 1793

³²² *GSG*, De Saumarez Collection, VIII 2, Garrison Court-Martial, May 23rd 1796, and Charles Morgan to Dalrymple, October 6th 1796

means of subsistence from civilians.³²³ Consequently, while a number of 'notorious and extreme crimes' were committed against the inhabitants (see chapter five), the majority of offences – as with rural communities in Great Britain³²⁴ – may be better classified as acts of 'plunder'.³²⁵ In 1801, a report from Alderney highlighted that in the two years since the expansion of the garrison, not less than 310 sheep and 37 lambs had been stolen from the inhabitants, along with at least fourteen acts of burglary and numerous thefts of poultry and vegetables.³²⁶ Likewise, low-level pillaging was also evident amongst soldiers stationed in Jersey and the crews of warships stationed in Guernsey Roads; residents in both Gorey and St. Peter Port complaining of the theft of bed-sheets, clothing, livestock, vegetables and firewood.³²⁷ On campaign in the Peninsula, Wellington had promised to punish such 'amateur banditry...in the most exemplary manner',³²⁸ the authorities in the Channel Islands can be seen to have done likewise, condemning looters to suffer flogging, imprisonment and/or banishment.³²⁹

As with their counterparts in other branches of the armed forces,³³⁰ the authorities in the Channel Islands were also faced with the consequences of widespread drunkenness; an issue which compromised both the effectiveness of the troops and their relationship with the civilian population. In 1798, for

³²³ C. Jones, 'The Military Revolution and the Professionalisation of the French Army under the Ancien Régime', in M. Duffy, *The Military Revolution and the State, 1500-1800* (Exeter, 1980) pp. 33-34

³²⁴ *DHC*, 1262M/0/O/LD/48/54-5, Rev. R. Walter to Earl Fortesque, March 26th 1801 and Mr. Cholwich to Earl Fortesque, March 27th 1801

³²⁵ Schwanefeld, 'The Foundation of British Strength', p. 73

³²⁶ *TNA*, HO 98/42, Le Mesurier to Pelham, August 15th 1801

³²⁷ *SROI*, SA 3/1/7/18, Elias Gaudin to Saumarez, May 30th 1803; *SJA*, A/A5/2, Letter of September 16th 1808; and A/A1/3, Letter of August 3rd 1810

³²⁸ G. Daly, 'Plunder on the Peninsula', p. 212

³²⁹ *SJA*, A/C1/1, General Order of May 4th 1803; A/A5/2, Letter of October 12th 1808; and A/A1/4, Letter of February 27th 1811

³³⁰ *DHC*, 152M/C/1793/OM1-4, Letter from Mitford, February 27th 1793

example, Major Vavasor³³¹ was found guilty of having been repeatedly intoxicated whilst in command of Elizabeth Castle, as well as having drunkenly threatened the officer in command of St. Aubin's Fort.³³² While incidences of disorder occasioned by intoxication were common throughout both the army and navy,³³³ the situation was exacerbated in the Channel Islands by an overlap with local smuggling (see chapter seven).³³⁴ By the later years of the war, not only were the men encamped at Le Dicq, Jersey, described as being 'beset by constant drunkenness',³³⁵ but a widespread black market trade in spirits – involving both troops and civilians – had been established throughout the Island. Troops quartered at Grouville were found to be purchasing unlicensed liquor from the inhabitants of Gorey Village,³³⁶ the mess-men at St. Ouen's Barracks were caught selling part of their corps' liquor ration,³³⁷ and a number of unlicensed publicans had set up illicit ale-houses.³³⁸

However, it is the Islands' militia forces, more so than the regular troops, which can be seen to have suffered from an internal crisis at the outbreak of the Great French War. Conway had long involved himself in the military affairs of the bailiwicks, and the plan of defence which he had proposed shortly after his appointment as Governor of Jersey (see appendix b) dominated local strategic thinking until the end of the war.³³⁹ However, while his scheme outlined several

³³¹ Senior Officer of Jersey's Corps of Invalids

³³² *SJA*, L/F/22/L/27, 'Court Martial of Major E Vavasor, Charged with Insulting Lieutenant Thomson and Unmilitary Conduct in St Aubin's Fort and Elizabeth Castle', July 24th 1798

³³³ Daly, 'Plunder on the Peninsula', p. 210; and O. Warner, *The British Navy: A Concise History* (London, 1975) pp. 102-104

³³⁴ *TNA*, FO 95/612/103, D'Auvergne to Nepean, June 2nd 1802 and *SJA*, A/A1/2, Letter of August 13th 1806

³³⁵ *SJA*, A/A1/3, Letter of September 24th 1810

³³⁶ *Ibid*, Letter of August 3rd 1810

³³⁷ *SJA*, A/A1/4, Letter of February 1st 1811

³³⁸ *SJA*, A/A1/3, Letter of August 2nd 1810

³³⁹ Davies, *Coastal Towers*, pp. 47-48

key improvements to the infrastructure of the bailiwicks³⁴⁰ – not least the chain of coastal towers which bear his name³⁴¹ (see chapter three) – it betrayed a significant blind-spot. Although the mutiny of the 104th Regt. of Foot had revealed the importance of maintaining the militia as a ‘combat-ready’ force – a lesson later reinforced by the Battle of Jersey – Conway’s plan gave little or no thought to the need for improvements in training or equipment. Instead, he had entrusted the defence of the Channel Islands to more ‘traditional’ means, assuming that strong fortifications and a large garrison would provide a sufficient defence against both external and internal threats.³⁴² Consequently, not only did the militia remain hampered by an archaic model of training and drill,³⁴³ but the expansion of the garrison served to disguise its various shortcomings as an aspect of local defence (see below).

Fortunately, the outbreak of war in 1793 appears to have forced the military authorities in both bailiwicks to recognise the extent of their negligence towards the militia, and the fundamental error of relying purely upon the regulars and fixed defences. Certainly, the coastal forts and batteries were far from obsolete – as Doyle remarked, ‘I deem it expedient to guard against worst by having my fortresses properly supplied’³⁴⁴ – but it was regarded as essential to adopt a more ‘aggressive’ defensive policy. This shift in emphasis was driven, not only by an increasing awareness of the hostile intentions of the French towards the Channel Islands (see chapter three),³⁴⁵ but also by fears concerning the openly

³⁴⁰ G. Faggioni, *Fortifications of the Channel Islands: Four Thousand Years of Military Architecture* (Jersey, 2013) p. 90

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 29

³⁴² Davies, *Coastal Towers*, p. 38; C. Platt, and R. Mesch, ‘Mont Orgueil Castle and General Conway: The Lost Chapter’, *ABSJ* 29:1 (2005) 104

³⁴³ D.T. Anstead, *The Channel Islands* (London, 1862) pp. 552-553

³⁴⁴ TNA, WO 1/605, Doyle to Brock Watson, Commissary-General, November 7th 1803

³⁴⁵ SJA, L/F/08/H/10-12 ‘Correspondence of Bouchette and Rossignol’, February 1794

pro-Republican stance of the Jeannots (see chapter five).³⁴⁶ Within the new strategic framework, the fixed defences would serve only as a means to disrupt the approach and/or disembarkation of the enemy, while the task of actually opposing their infiltration of the countryside would fall to the garrison and militia.³⁴⁷ As Don observed: 'heavy batteries may be of some use, [but] the security of the Islands depends on having the means to oppose and repel the enemy at the water's edge',³⁴⁸ while Doyle scorned his predecessors for having 'confined their [attention] to the fortresses'.³⁴⁹

Training – The Emergence of 'Military Pedagogy'

With respect to the reform of the Channel Islands' militia, the key feature of this process was a shift from 'passive' to 'active' defence: however, any conclusions drawn regarding the effectiveness of these measures must take account of the fact that the troops never came into direct contact with the enemy. Although a significant number of Jersey's militiamen could lay claim to a degree of combat experience, the majority of these men would have fought in no engagements other than the Battle of Jersey. Moreover, as has been already noted, the relative ease with which victory had been secured in 1781 had the unfortunate secondary consequence of disguising the need for introducing improvements to the militia (see above). By 1793, the impact of the resultant stagnation had become all too apparent: the consensus amongst senior officers being that the Islanders could be relied upon only if the enemy failed to secure a beachhead,

³⁴⁶ *Gazette de L'Ile de Jersey*, January 2nd 1790

³⁴⁷ TNA, HO 98/3, Col. Craig, Memoir on the Defence of Jersey, Undated, 1793

³⁴⁸ SJA, L/F/95/B/9, Don to 'My Dear Sir', October 27th 1811

³⁴⁹ Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 17

and 'would not stand after the first check'.³⁵⁰ Even Craig, who praised Conway for his having 'brought [the militia] to a considerable degree of perfection', was forced to admit that it was naïve to expect part-time soldiers to 'abandon their houses and families' to the depredations of the enemy 'and shut themselves up in an outpost to share the fate [of the regulars]'.³⁵¹

Despite the extent of such scepticism concerning the value of the Channel Islands' 'citizens in arms', the immediacy of the French threat (see chapter three) led to a recognition of the need for 'zealous co-operation' and 'uniform cordiality and harmony' between the Militia and the Regulars.³⁵² As was highlighted at the start of this chapter, the British Army as existed at the beginning of the Great French War was far from fit for purpose; the previous three decades having witnessed 'all kinds of deviation' from the standard drill manual. According to Glover, this problem had become so widespread that it would have been virtually impossible for a brigade of troops to successfully execute 'any one combined movement, or the various parts of it, on the same principle'.³⁵³ This is not to say that tactical innovation was unwanted by the British Army, but rather to acknowledge that such inventiveness could be employed only amongst those troops who possessed a firm grasp of the fundamentals of military practice.³⁵⁴ Consequently, the primary focus of military reform in the Channel Islands during the 1790s was the formulation of a more practical and efficient approach to drill, though the pace of reform was slowed considerably by the 'double-edged' nature of the local Militia Law.

³⁵⁰ TNA, HO 99/1, Dundas to Falle and Brown, January 12th 1793; HO 98/24, Col. Thomas Dundas to Sir David Dundas, February 1st 1793

³⁵¹ TNA, HO 98/3, Col. Craig, 'Memoir on the Defence of Jersey', March 1793

³⁵² SJA, L/F/08/A/32, Order from HQ, Guernsey, April 5th, 1795; TNA, WO 1/604, Dalrymple to Dundas, September 5th 1796

³⁵³ Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, p. 117

³⁵⁴ SJA, L/F/97/M5/7, 'Proposal for the Military Training of Boys Over the Age of Twelve', 1807

Although it has been already noted that compulsory military service was upheld by the inhabitants of the Channel Islands as a mark of patriotism (see chapter one), it is interesting to note that this attitude was in evidence even amongst the local Quaker and Methodist congregations. Indeed, while certain related practices, such as Sunday drill, served as a source of discontent amongst Dissenting militiamen (see chapter five), the majority of the corps remained convinced that the Law served as proof of their ‘unshaken loyalty and attachment to their Sovereign’.³⁵⁵ However, much as the purchase system and other forms of patronage sustained the careers of regular officers who ‘neither knew nor cared for their duties’,³⁵⁶ so the nature of the local Militia Law served to shield poor-quality officers and NCOs from disciplinary action. In the case of Madeira, Sicily and Naples, the British were able to summarily dismiss incompetent members of the local officer corps; described, respectively, as ‘quite ignorant of the meaning of military discipline’),³⁵⁷ ‘disaffected and disloyal’,³⁵⁸ and ‘either useless or the subject of ridicule’.³⁵⁹ By contrast, it was required by the Militia Law of both Jersey and Guernsey that ineffective officers and NCOs be brought to trial before the Royal Court, their removal from command being possible only on the occasion of a guilty verdict (see below).³⁶⁰

In spite of this obstacle, efforts to improve the training of all troops in the Channel Islands can be seen to have gathered momentum after 1795, when Gordon succeeded Balcarres as Commander-in-Chief of Jersey and Small entered his third year as Lieutenant-Governor of Guernsey. By this time, senior

³⁵⁵ *SJA*, L/F/22/L/32, ‘Trial of Philip Arthur’, 1808

³⁵⁶ Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, p. 117

³⁵⁷ Gregory, *Madeira*, p. 59

³⁵⁸ Gregory, *Malta*, p. 275

³⁵⁹ Gregory, *Sicily*, p. 30

³⁶⁰ *SJA*, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to Col. Mauger, April 13th 1801 and Le Couteur to the *Procureur*, April 24th 1801

officers within the British army had become firmly polarised on the subject of military theory. On the one hand were the 'Prussians', led by the Duke of York, Sir David Dundas and Sir William Fawcett; on the other, the 'Americans', led by Earl Cornwallis, General Simcoe, Sir William Howe and Sir Charles Grey.³⁶¹ The former school – emphasising the training of infantrymen to carry out precise, well-practiced manoeuvres both in massed ranks and in the heat of battle³⁶² – dominated British military thought until 1797, when proposals were put forward for the creation of special battalions of light infantry.³⁶³ However, criticisms of the 'Prussian' method had been advanced since at least 1785, when Cornwallis had described it as 'ridiculous', 'mechanical' and 'erroneous', and had claimed that 'the worst General in England would be hooted at for practicing [such manoeuvres]'.³⁶⁴

Within the Channel Islands too, it is clear that the new 'American' doctrine was growing in popularity amongst the military authorities, the most telling evidence being Small's General Order of April 5th 1795. Referring both to the regulars and militia, he declared that the men were no longer to be 'harassed' with 'complicated and intricate manoeuvres', but instead taught only those deemed 'indispensably necessary...on real active service'.³⁶⁵ This initial plan was elaborated upon by Gordon in 1800, when he observed that the existing drill system remained 'prejudicial to the service', since the men continued to exercise *en masse*. Adopting the principle that 'awkward men are never so well taught as when they are by themselves', he proposed that 'those as understand

³⁶¹ Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, pp. 31-32

³⁶² Bartlett, 'The Development of the British Army', p. 165

³⁶³ Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, p. 126

³⁶⁴ Earl Cornwallis, cited in J. Black, *A Military Revolution? Military Change and European Society, 1550-1800* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey, 1991) pp. 62-63

³⁶⁵ SJA, L/F/08/A/32, Order from HQ, Guernsey, April 5th 1795

their exercise should form one great squad, while the rest should be divided into [smaller] squads and drilled by smart officers'.³⁶⁶ In June 1807, Don extended this approach to the training of the 'Boys', it being ordered that those 'who do not attend drills on the days appointed, are awkward or who misbehave under arms' would be required to muster for additional instruction on Sundays, under the supervision of a dedicated drill sergeant'.³⁶⁷ This reflected the reformation of training practices with the British Army as a whole: in May 1795, the Duke of York advised that summer training camps should set aside one day per week for the training of men judged to be 'negligent or irregular in their exercises'.³⁶⁸

The other key element of drill reform in the Channel Islands concerned the improvement of the training of the 'Boys': a practice which, while it has since been portrayed as 'an unpleasant, bibulous trade in children',³⁶⁹ represented a valuable apprenticeship for those destined to join the parish regiments. Indeed, when consulted by the new Lieutenant-Governor in 1806, Le Couteur praised the late Gordon for his having recognised the 'great advantage' which might be derived from requiring all boys over the age of thirteen to participate in the weekly drill. In 1799, for example, Don's predecessor had convinced the States to meet the cost of appointing three sergeants – in addition to 'three militia officers, paid by His Majesty' – to assist in the training of the Boys.³⁷⁰ The importance of this move may be demonstrated by the fact that a similar scheme had been vetoed in 1796, on the grounds that paying 'native' drill sergeants was both 'inconsistent with local law' and 'likely to prejudice the privileges of the

³⁶⁶ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, 'Circular from Le Couteur to the Colonels of Militia', April 21st 1800

³⁶⁷ SJA, L/F/95/A/18/1-2, 'General Orders re. Assistant Inspectors and Drill Sergeants', June 16th 1807

³⁶⁸ TNA, WO 3/28, Adjutant-General's Circular Letter, May 16th 1795, cited in Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, p. 121

³⁶⁹ Bartlett, 'The Development of the British Army', p. 144

³⁷⁰ Le Couteur to Don, May 27th 1806, reproduced in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 41-43

Island'.³⁷¹ However, the initiative also revealed Gordon's willingness to work in conjunction with his subordinates: the Colonels of the Militia having advised him that the existing drill sergeants were both 'insufficiently qualified' and 'too much connected [to the Islanders] to drill and instruct the 'Boys' properly'.³⁷²

While it remains unclear as to whether the reforms of 1799 had any immediate effect, it is evident that by 1807, a number of significant improvements had been introduced with respect to general militia training, the most important of these relating to the appointment of drill sergeants. In an effort to guarantee both discipline and efficiency, it was decided that all new appointees would be required to have obtained a prize for drill within the ranks of the 'Boys', and that priority would be given to 'the respectable farmers and tradesmen' who were fluent in both French and English.³⁷³ Likewise, the new drill manual was designed not only to provide instruction in 'the military air and carriage, step and march', but also to train the Boys in the use of their arms in accordance with the manual exercise, platoon fire exercise, artillery exercise, and cavalry exercise'.³⁷⁴ In October 1812, further demonstration was provided of the efforts of the Commanders-in-Chief, in conjunction with their subordinates, to tackle the matter of the 'Boys' drill. Following consultation with Lieutenant-Colonel Touzel,³⁷⁵ Don recommended that those aged between fifteen and seventeen should be exercised in a dedicated 'battalion', and though the size of this group naturally fluctuated, its strength in 1813 stood at 353 rank-and-file.³⁷⁶

³⁷¹ *SJA*, L/F/106/A/1, Gordon to Howard, March 1796

³⁷² *SJA*, L/F/95/A/18/5, Colonels of Militia to Gordon, January 18th 1799

³⁷³ *SJA*, L/F/95/A/18/1-2, 'General Orders re. Assistant Inspectors and Drill Sergeants', June 16th 1807

³⁷⁴ *SJA*, L/F/97/M5/7, 'Proposal for the Military Training of Boys', 1807

³⁷⁵ Le Couteur's successor as Inspector-General of Militia

³⁷⁶ *SJA*, A/A1/6, Letters of October 8th 1812 and October 4th 1813

Specialisation – the ‘American’ Influence

Although there had been considerable debate as to whom credit should be given for having convinced the ‘Prussians’ of the importance of light infantry training to the future of the British army, it is clear that by 1798, significant progress had been made.³⁷⁷ Likewise, the view of the auxiliary forces as representing little more than a recruiting-ground for the woefully under-strength line regiments (18,800 men were wanted in 1796) was being increasingly challenged. In light of French successes on the Continent, the emerging ‘American’ school envisaged a system wherein the militia and volunteers might supply a 60,000-strong reserve, supported – in the event of invasion – by a force of irregulars.³⁷⁸ However, while the early ‘Americanisation’ of Britain’s defensive strategy was driven from the top down – chiefly by the formerly ‘Prussian’ Dundas³⁷⁹ – the process in the Channel Islands was initially reliant upon ‘grassroots’ innovation. In 1797, for example, Guernsey’s West Regiment of Militia set out a proposal for the creation of a company of *chasseurs*; a force modelled, not on the Militia’s existent light companies, but rather on the elite marksmen employed by the French army.³⁸⁰

However, while large-scale ‘Americanisation’ did not emerge in the Channel Islands until long after its popularisation in Great Britain, it should be noted that the inhabitants – as with the men of the ‘Experimental Corps of Riflemen’³⁸¹ – were regarded as being naturally suited to this new form of warfare. Not only

³⁷⁷ Bartlett, ‘The Development of the British Army’, p. 174; and Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, p. 129

³⁷⁸ Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, pp. 29-30

³⁷⁹ See D. Dundas, *Plan and Proposals for Rendering the Body of the People Instrumental to the General Defence of the Country, in Case of Invasion* (London, 1798)

³⁸⁰ SJA, L/F/08/L/17, ‘Rules for a Company of Chasseurs in the West Regt. of Militia’, May 14th 1797

³⁸¹ Schwanenfeld, ‘National Identity and the British Common Soldier’, pp. 31 and 73

had Gordon permitted a considerable degree of latitude with respect to the finer points of drill,³⁸² but in accordance with the 'American' emphasis on light infantry,³⁸³ had ordered that all militia 'Lads' aged fifteen and over be instructed in the use of the cavalry carbine.³⁸⁴ This initiative was built upon by Don, who concluded that, since it was 'the custom of the Island for every boy, as soon as he is able to carry a fowling piece, to go out shooting small birds', the older Lads might 'render essential services as sharpshooters'.³⁸⁵ To this end, he entered into consultation with Le Couteur, who informed him that there were already some 250 Lads who might, in the event of an invasion, be attached to the parochial regiments as marksmen.³⁸⁶ Moreover, his praise of the Lads' 'strength and expertness in exercise' clearly convinced the British government that the scheme was a viable defensive investment, since the chosen recruits were armed and equipped at their expense, not that of the local treasury.

Based on Don's assessment, it is possible to argue that he sought to implement a similar form of 'national mobilisation' which Dundas had envisaged in 1798,³⁸⁷ as well as encourage the form of military 'specialisation' which had underpinned the formation of the rifle corps.³⁸⁸ Since any invasion of the Islands was likely to devolve into 'a war of raids rather than battles', Don was provided with ample motivation to ensure that the Boys should be transformed into a force capable of acting as 'an integral, if not decisive, factor in any contest'.³⁸⁹ Nor does the Commander-in-Chief's plan appear to have been without merit, especially if

³⁸² SJA, L/C/68/A/1, 'Le Couteur to the Colonels of Militia', April 21st 1800

³⁸³ I.F.W. Beckett, *Britain's Part-Time Soldiers: Amateur Military Tradition, 1558-1945*, 2nd Edition (Barnsley, 2011) p. 77

³⁸⁴ Le Couteur to Don, May 27th 1806, reproduced in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 41-43

³⁸⁵ Don to Hawksbury, October 6th 1806, reproduced in Ibid, p. 46

³⁸⁶ Le Couteur to Don, October 3rd 1806, reproduced in Ibid, p. 47

³⁸⁷ Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, p. 34

³⁸⁸ Glover, *Peninsular Preparation*, p. 126

³⁸⁹ Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, pp. 29-30

considered in the context of weight of numbers. According to Don, the number of recruits subject to the above-mentioned summer exercises was never less than 700,³⁹⁰ and at least a third of these were judged each year as being capable of acting as 'skirmishers, sharpshooters, or light infantry'.³⁹¹ Moreover, the figure appears to have remained fairly constant throughout the War: in 1810, 832 'Lads' are recorded as having been exercised over the course of the summer, and 250 were found fit for service.³⁹² It should be noted, however, that since the bulk of those selected were aged between sixteen and eighteen, there would have been a significant annual turnover in manpower, the older Lads being required to join their respective parochial regiments.

Whatever the shortcomings of such a force may have been, it remains evident that this method for creating an 'irregular' force was broadly consistent with British military thinking. However, in light of the extensive contact between the Channel Islanders and the *chouans* (see chapter nine), it is not unreasonable to suggest that Don and his colleagues may have drawn inspiration from the tactics employed by the royalist warbands. Despite the fact that the counter-Revolutionary insurgency had been almost entirely suppressed by 1804, these guerrillas had forced the Republican troops to pay a high price for their final victory, which was achieved only after the adoption of the strategy of *colonnes infernales*.³⁹³ In addition, it should be emphasised that while the completion of the military roads significantly improved the efficiency of local troop movement (see chapter four), the internal topography of the Channel Islands – especially

³⁹⁰ Don to Hawksbury, October 6th 1806, reproduced in Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 46

³⁹¹ Le Couteur to General Don, October 3rd 1806, reproduced in *Ibid*, p. 47

³⁹² *SJA*, A/A1/6, Letter of September 16th 1810

³⁹³ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, pp. 255-256

with respect to the rural parishes³⁹⁴ – continued to resemble the *bocage*.³⁹⁵ The strategic benefits of this terrain were quickly recognised by both Don and Doyle,³⁹⁶ who proposed that in the event of a withdrawal, light troops might turn ‘every rising ground, ravine, bank, wall, hedge and tree’³⁹⁷ into a firing position from which to protect troops setting up roadblocks.³⁹⁸

The other ‘support unit’ which can be seen to have been brought to its zenith during Don’s tenure was the militia artillery, which underwent considerable reform in terms of their equipment. Although Small had heaped praise upon the Royal Guernsey Artillery in 1793, declaring, ‘there is no corps that I ever saw more expert or better marksmen with their field pieces’,³⁹⁹ the requirements of the bailiwicks changed dramatically over the following fifteen years, particularly after the opening of the military roads. With a greater potential for the effective deployment of mobile artillery, Don recommended that the strength of the garrison artillery be increased to three brigades, and the parochial ordnance be replaced, the existing pieces being ‘of a very old pattern, [carrying] only twenty-eight rounds’.⁴⁰⁰ Similarly, he took steps to adapt existing armament to serve more general purposes: for example, the militia’s signal guns – being of sufficient calibre to inflict meaningful damage on enemy vessels – were mounted on traversing platforms.⁴⁰¹ Likewise, the coastal artillery was rebalanced and/or strengthened, the supernumerary artillerymen were formed

³⁹⁴ Davies, *Coastal Towers*, p. 48 and ‘Translation of an Account of the States Sitting of December 23rd 1806’, reproduced in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 32-33

³⁹⁵ TNA, PC 1/117B, D’Auvergne to Dundas, March 16th 1796

³⁹⁶ North, ‘General Hoche and Counter-Insurgency’, 530

³⁹⁷ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of August 7th 1806

³⁹⁸ Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 17

³⁹⁹ TNA, WO 1/603, Small to Amherst, January 5th 1795

⁴⁰⁰ SJA, A/A1/2, Letters of June 30th and July 24th 1806

⁴⁰¹ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of September 27th 1807

into detachments equipped with 6-pdrs, and the Town Battalion of Militia Artillery – a battery of four 6-pdrs – was converted into a car brigade.⁴⁰²

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the role played by several miscellaneous units which were well established in the Channel Islands by the end of the first decade of war. First, although the Islands' hinterland was quite unsuitable for cavalry, it appears nonetheless that the local gentry shared the desire of their English counterparts to prove themselves as 'doing their bit' with respect to the demands of national defence.⁴⁰³ Following the pattern of units formed by the county gentry⁴⁰⁴ in the wake of the French landing at Fishguard,⁴⁰⁵ the mid-1790s witnessed the formation of the Jersey Royal Horse and the Guernsey Light Dragoons. As in the case of British volunteer cavalry units, neither force received any Government assistance: all ranks were required to furnish their own horses and accoutrements and maintain their arms and uniforms, and the members of each corps decided upon an appropriate system of punishment.⁴⁰⁶ Another key initiative introduced at this time was the augmentation of the local Invalids: soldiers who were unable to perform front-line duty, but who – being capable of service as artillerymen – manned the castles, forts, Conway Towers and coastal batteries.⁴⁰⁷ In 1796, a force of 107 invalid artillerymen⁴⁰⁸ from the Royal Military Hospital Chelsea was attached to Jersey, effectively adding another company of artillerymen, and freeing up militiamen for other duties.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰² SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of June 7th 1807; and A/A1/3, Letters of September 11th and 16th 1810

⁴⁰³ Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, p. 70

⁴⁰⁴ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 264

⁴⁰⁵ DHC, 1262M/0/O/LD/12/48, Fortesque to Worth, March 4th 1797; and 1262M/0/O/LD/12/50, Fortesque to Dunsterville, March 5th 1797

⁴⁰⁶ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, 'Regulations for the Jersey Royal Horse Troop', undated; and TNA, WO 1/602, 'Rules of the Guernsey Light Dragoons', September 3rd 1794

⁴⁰⁷ SJA, A/C1/1, General Orders of December 30th 1801, May 22nd and May 29th 1802

⁴⁰⁸ This detachment was comprised of four sergeants, five corporals and ninety-eight privates.

⁴⁰⁹ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, Letter from Horseguards, September 28th 1796

Arms and Equipment

Although it was Don who first put forward the maxim that the defence of the Channel Islands depended upon possessing ‘the means to oppose and repel the enemy at the water’s edge’,⁴¹⁰ the necessity of providing the militia with adequate arms and equipment had been recognised some two decades earlier. In 1792, increasing tensions between Britain and France had led Jersey’s ‘Committee for the Defence of the Island’ to issue a new set of regulations to be followed by all militiamen in respect of the maintenance of their arms. For example, a fine of twenty-four *sous*⁴¹¹ was to be levied against any man who failed to maintain his equipment, while any man found to have ‘in any manner disposed of’ his arms or accoutrements would be liable, on appeal, for either the value of the item(s) or a fine of twenty *Livres*.⁴¹² However, the effectiveness of such punishments relied upon the appointment of trustworthy officers to oversee the care of the regiments’ arms; indeed, an inspection of Jersey’s militia arsenals in 1801 resulted in three regimental quartermasters being reduced to the ranks. At Grouville, it was found that many of the muskets were ‘corroded with rust and ruined forever’; at St. Saviour, that they were ‘by no means in good condition, with seven wanting repairs’; and in the arsenal of a third Regiment, that there were ‘at least ten shockingly neglected [muskets], with the carbines also in bad order’.⁴¹³

⁴¹⁰ *SJA*, L/F/95/B/9, Don to ‘My Dear Sir’, October 27th 1811

⁴¹¹ At this time, the *Livre Français* was Jersey’s official currency; one *livre* being divided into twenty *sous*. The exchange rate of twenty-four *Livres Français* to one English Pound meant that one English shilling equalled twenty-four Jersey *sous*, and one English penny equalled two Jersey *sous*.

⁴¹² *SJA*, F/M/R1/26, ‘Extract from the States of Jersey re. the Defence of the Island and the Militia’, April 11th 1792

⁴¹³ *SJA*, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to Colonel (illegible), April 7th 1801; Le Couteur to Mauger, April 13th 1801; and Le Couteur to the *Procureur*, April 24th 1801

Aside from the local failures in terms of arms maintenance, it is also evident that the British Government had long neglected to provide the Channel Islands' Militia with up-to-date clothing and accoutrements. Again, it is evident that problems of supply were no less evident than with respect to the Regular Army,⁴¹⁴ and while Gordon was praised for his 'favourable opinion' and 'kind intentions', the situation facing him was certainly serious. According to the report that he received from the 'Colonels of Militia', the men had received no new uniforms or other essential clothing since 1791, while basic necessities such as belts and ammunition boxes had not been replaced since 1780.⁴¹⁵ Indeed, while a reliance on 'antique' accoutrements may not have been as fundamental a handicap as a shortage of serviceable firearms, the Militia officers nonetheless regarded the re-equipage of their troops to be of paramount importance for the defence of the Island. This sentiment was echoed by Gordon in a subsequent report, in which the British government was advised that 'if the evident advantage and security which the Island enjoys from this useful body of men' was to be maintained, then the issuing of new clothing and accoutrements should be regarded as a matter of 'the utmost necessity'.⁴¹⁶

In spite of this increased pressure from below, it was not until after Don assumed command that serious improvements appear to have been made with respect to the militia's arms and equipment. Under a new set of regulations issued to the regimental quartermasters, all articles delivered to the arsenals were to be 'accurately examined', and any found to be in poor condition were to be 'promptly repaired or replaced'. In order to offset the additional workload, the quartermasters to be exempted from all other forms of military service, and

⁴¹⁴ Bartlett, 'The Development of the British Army', p. 22

⁴¹⁵ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, Colonels of Militia to Gordon, pre. February 1796

⁴¹⁶ Ibid, Gordon to an Unnamed Adjutant, undated, but between March 12th 1796 and April 1st 1796

entitled to a salary of up to twelve *Livres* per company under their jurisdiction, as well as a government allowance of twenty-four *Livres* towards the cost of any repairs.⁴¹⁷ The necessity of such inducements can be clearly seen when one examines the reports from the inspections which gave rise to the new regulations; the situation being yet more unsettling than that uncovered by Le Couteur in 1801 (see above). Between November 1806 and January 1807, no less than 885 muskets and twenty-eight carbines were found to be in an 'unserviceable' condition, and it was only through the assistance of the Master-General of the Ordnance that these were promptly replaced.⁴¹⁸

Enforcement of Discipline

With respect to their concept of militia duty, the general attitude of the men of the Channel Islands Militia may be considered analogous to the 'parochialism' evidenced by Britain's volunteers, militiamen and yeomanry.⁴¹⁹ As has been already mentioned, it was the general belief amongst the inhabitants that their duty to the Crown lay in the defence of the bailiwicks, and that the *Constitutions* granted them exemption from overseas service and/or impressment⁴²⁰ (see chapter six). Likewise, the volunteer movement was characterised by a strong sense of 'local defence': even during the 'crisis years' of 1792 and 1798, no more than ten percent of the men who enlisted in these corps agreed to serve beyond their own districts.⁴²¹ As for the fencibles and yeomanry, it was generally perceived that their role was not one of 'national defence', but rather

⁴¹⁷ SJA, F/M/R1/34, 'Notice from the States of Jersey re. the Regulations Concerning Arsenals in the Island', October 3rd 1807

⁴¹⁸ SJA, A/A1/2, Letters for November 18th 1796 and February 7th 1807

⁴¹⁹ L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1847* (New Haven, Connecticut, 2005) p. 311

⁴²⁰ GSG, A/IV/80/16, Letter from the Royal Court, Guernsey, July 20th 1802; and A/IV/80/1, Letter from the Admiralty Office, July 18th 1808, and 'Letter Concerning the Conduct of Captain Mudge, Commanding *HMS Blanche*', undated

⁴²¹ Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, p. 73

to relieve the regular army from the burden of peacekeeping duties (see chapter four).⁴²² In addition, it is important to emphasise that the Channel Islands' militias, like these latter corps, were under the command of local gentry, and looked upon 'active service' as being subject to the demands of the changing seasons. Just as Jersey's militiamen could legally surrender their arms in order to go fishing (see above),⁴²³ yeomanry officers such as Lord Somerville proved reluctant to allow their men to be mustered during harvest time.⁴²⁴

In spite of such broad similarities, a number of important distinctions existed between the local militiamen and the British auxiliaries, most notably in relation to the means by which the respective forces obtained manpower. As highlighted by Cookson, 'the British armed nation did not arise out of a society that was highly militarized, either in terms of the social esteem given to military men, or actual military participation by the elite'.⁴²⁵ By contrast, it has been already noted that the Channel Islands' militia – both in terms of the individual soldiers and the institution – were regarded by the inhabitants as a fundamental symbol of their historic relationship with the British crown, and the foundation of their unique constitutional privileges (see chapter one). Consequently, while the British militiaman was selected by ballot, obliged to serve for only five years, could gain exemption by enlisting in the volunteers,⁴²⁶ or could pay for a substitute⁴²⁷ to serve in his place, his counterpart in the Channel Islands was

⁴²² G. Best, *War and Society in Revolutionary Europe: 1770-1870* (Stroud, 1998) p. 127; Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, pp. 26 and 29

⁴²³ SJA, F/M/R1/34, Article Five, 'Regulations concerning the Arsenal', October 3rd 1807

⁴²⁴ Beckett, *Britain's Part-Time Soldiers*, pp. 74-75

⁴²⁵ Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, p. 22

⁴²⁶ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 2

⁴²⁷ It is estimated that only twelve percent of the 26,000 men balloted between 1807 and 1808 actually served in person. See Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, pp. 260-261

obliged to spend virtually his entire life in the ranks.⁴²⁸ Indeed, while an Order in Council of 1798 permitted the local Methodists to absent themselves from Sunday drill,⁴²⁹ a further ten years were to elapse before the right to cite 'objections of conscience' as grounds for exemption was extended to members of the Church of England (see chapter five).⁴³⁰

In terms of the enforcement of discipline, many of the issues which plagued the Channel Islands' militia regiments were, at the very least, similar to those faced by their British counterparts. For instance, just as the volunteers were undermined by social and political rivalries which 'spilled over' from civilian life,⁴³¹ so Jersey's militiamen often found themselves blurring the line between the military and civilian sphere. As was explained at the start of this thesis, the period immediately prior to the Great French War had been dominated by the polarisation of local politics, and the emergence – in Jersey at least – of a recognisably bipartite political system.⁴³² However, while this divide had a significant impact in terms of local social stability (see chapter five), it was exacerbated by the parochial structure of the militia, and the fact that most of the members of the States or the Royal Court also held commissions as company or field officers. Consequently, not only could Sunday drill be readily exploited as an arena for political grandstanding or intimidation in support of one or other of the competing factions, but 'civil' trials in the Royal Court became courts-martial in all but name. As Le Cras observed, even when the

⁴²⁸ 'General Don's Report on the Island of Jersey, November 16th 1807', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 47-48

⁴²⁹ 'Letter from the Court of St. James, December 12th, 1798', reproduced in *SJA*, L/F/22/L/32, 'Trial of Philip Arthur', 1808

⁴³⁰ *SJA*, L/F/97/M5/11, 'Printed Poster of an Order in Council concerning the Militia Drills on Sundays', April 18th 1810 and L/F/22/L/34, 'Printed Petition of Members of the South West Regiment Militia Concerning Drilling on Sundays', undated, 1811

⁴³¹ Cookson, *British Armed Nation*, pp. 77-78

⁴³² H.D. Inglis and M. Scholefield, *The Channel Islands: Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney*, Vol. I (London, 1834) pp. 105-107

case being heard was wholly unconnected to military affairs, it was by no means unusual to find that the accused was a member of the regiment commanded by one or more of the Jurats on the bench.⁴³³

Problematic though this situation may have been, it is evident that the ability to call upon the assistance of the civil powers presented the authorities with a useful solution to a more serious difficulty; that of maintaining effective discipline amongst a force which was only partially subject to military law.⁴³⁴ In the case of the Channel Islands, the 'Code of 1771' punished a number of offences relating to Sunday drill,⁴³⁵ although the fact that the sanctions consisted only of 'pecuniary fines' drew criticism from some 'professional' officers.⁴³⁶ However, two supplementary ordinances were passed during the initial years of Gordon's tenure which reinforced this central piece of legislation, both being signed into law in April 1793. The first has been already mentioned in relation to the issue of arms maintenance, but is also noteworthy as having forbidden militiamen either to go to sea or to exchange regiments without the permission of a superior officer.⁴³⁷ The second key ordinance, in an effort to counter the instances of drunkenness frequently witnessed amongst garrison troops,⁴³⁸ set out restrictions on the purchase of alcohol by all military personnel, regardless of rank or branch of service. Not only were tavern-keepers forbidden – on pain of a fine of 200 pounds sterling – to sell liquor to the troops without a license,

⁴³³ Le Cras, *Guide to the Island of Jersey*, p. 47

⁴³⁴ Don to Hawkesbury, November 28th 1807, reproduced in Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 50

⁴³⁵ Le Cras, *Guide to the Island of Jersey*, p. 132

⁴³⁶ TNA, HO 98/24, Brown to Dundas, January 17th 1793

⁴³⁷ SJA, F/M/R1/26, 'States of Jersey re. Defence and the Militia', April 11th 1792

⁴³⁸ Gregory, *Minorca*, pp. 96-97

but soldiers required permission from a commanding officer in order to purchase alcohol from taverns, cabarets or *maisons particulières*'.⁴³⁹

Forms of Punishment

What is particularly noteworthy with respect to these subsidiary regulations is that, in spite of the militiamen being subject to the full force of the civil law, no attempt seems to have been made to replace the local system of fines and imprisonment with more 'traditional' military punishments. Certainly, such a move would have been perfectly feasible: though in decline in Britain since the 1720s,⁴⁴⁰ 'judicial corporal punishment' remained in use in the Channel Islands throughout the Great French War. This was particularly true in the case of offences such as housebreaking, theft, sexual assault, and failure to comply with terms of banishment; the standard punishment in each case being a flogging by the public executioner.⁴⁴¹ However, it is reasonable to suggest that the reluctance to introduce flogging as a 'standard' punishment for the Channel Islands' militia arose from the fact that the socio-economic status of the rank-and-file rendered financial punishment far more effective.⁴⁴² Indeed, while Brown – then Lieutenant-Governor of Guernsey – may have protested that only formal military discipline might 'bring them to any great perfection',⁴⁴³ it must be remembered that the Islanders all served without pay.⁴⁴⁴ Consequently, at a time when even a skilled labourer in St. Helier might earn only twenty-one

⁴³⁹ SJA, F/M/R1/24, 'Printed Notice from the States re the Defence of the Island', April 3rd 1793

⁴⁴⁰ 'Punishments at the Old Bailey: The Late Seventeenth to the Early Nineteenth Century', in *Proceedings of the Old Bailey, London's Central Criminal Court: 1674-1913*, <https://www.oldbaileyonline.org/static/Punishment.jsp>, accessed August 21st 2017

⁴⁴¹ SJA A/A5/2, Letter of October 12th 1809

⁴⁴² Act of the States of Jersey, October 18th 1798, in M. Le Lièvre, *Histoire du Methodisme dans les Iles de la Manche* (London, 1885) pp. 367-368, in P. Brock, *Against the Draft: Essays on Conscientious Objection from the Radical Transformation to the Second World War* (Toronto, 2006) p. 107

⁴⁴³ TNA, HO 98/24, Brown to Dundas, January 17th 1793

⁴⁴⁴ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, 'Howard to Anon., Requesting that paid NCOs be Attached to the Militia', undated

shillings per week,⁴⁴⁵ any disciplinary fines incurred would consume a significant proportion of the average militiaman's meagre income.

Aside from the financial pressure which might be brought to bear upon recalcitrant militiamen, the public perception of the nature of militia service as a 'mark of loyalty to the sovereign' also served to discourage suggestions of the adoption of corporal punishment on a wider scale.⁴⁴⁶ Instead, reports of a build-up of troops on the neighbouring coast were occasioned by reassurances of the inhabitants' 'inviolable attachment to the best of Kings and to the British government, under whom [they have] enjoyed inestimable advantages for many years'.⁴⁴⁷ However, as has been already noted, what is most interesting with respect to the issue of discipline is the extent to which the 'principle' of compulsory militia service was supported by those Islanders who subscribed – at least officially - to a policy of conscientious objection. For example, while the Quakers as a whole were to face persecution in both bailiwicks for their open opposition to the bearing of arms,⁴⁴⁸ at least some Friends continued to muster with their regiments when required (albeit in peacetime).⁴⁴⁹ Similarly, in spite of their official opposition to Sunday drill, the Methodists maintained that they were willing 'to do with cheerfulness every necessary military duty', to be 'placed in the front of the Battle', and to 'devote any time on the common weekdays to learn the military exercise'.⁴⁵⁰

⁴⁴⁵ SJA, L/F/95/A/21, 'Letter from Don Concerning the Removal of the 3rd/1st and 2nd/3rd Regts of Foot from Jersey and asking for Masons and Blacksmiths', August 29th 1807

⁴⁴⁶ SJA, L/F/22/L/32 'Trial of Philip Arthur', 1808

⁴⁴⁷ SJA, L/F/97/M2/39, De Carteret, *Greffier*, to *The Times*, March 15th 1794

⁴⁴⁸ SJA, L/F/97/M2/47, 'Research into Lieutenant-Governor Gordon and his Troubles with the Dissenters, Including Methodists who Object to Sunday Training', 1798

⁴⁴⁹ Brock, *Against the Draft*, p. 99

⁴⁵⁰ 'Letter from the Court of St. James, December 12th, 1798', reproduced in SJA, L/F/22/L/32, Trial of Philip Arthur', 1808

Regardless of the level of patriotism exhibited by the Islands' population, it is clear from the surviving militia disciplinary records that strict forms of punishment remained necessary. In November 1799, for example, the nightly inspections of the coastal guard-posts and towers revealed no fewer than five separate instances of dereliction of duty within twelve days. These included: one instance of a sentry being 'surprised' while asleep at his post; three instances of the guard being found entirely absent; and one instance of the guard being found to be in possession of unserviceable muskets.⁴⁵¹ Nor did the situation improve in the following year: in March 1800, five 'Chiefs of the Guard' were summoned before the Royal Court in order to answer for having been absent from their posts.⁴⁵² Likewise in April, one of the Masters-at-Arms was fined for having been A.W.O.L. from training – he was later found to have gone fishing⁴⁵³ – while in May, four Boys of the Town Battalion were charged with having 'behaved in a disobedient and improper manner' at the weekly drill.⁴⁵⁴ The most notable incident, however, occurred in August, when a number of half-pay officers refused to undertake militia duty⁴⁵⁵ at a time when the force could only reliably count upon 2,000 rank-and-file for active service.⁴⁵⁶

Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that the employment of a financial rather than corporal system of punishment was not without its supporters in Britain; as Thompson observed, 'next to the press gang, flogging was perhaps

⁴⁵¹ *SJA*, L/C/68/A/1, November 1799, all entries

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, March 1800, all entries

⁴⁵³ *Ibid*, Le Couteur to Colonel (name illegible), April 30th 1800

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid*, Le Couteur to Gordon, May 9th 1800, and August 1st 1800

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid*, Le Couteur to Colonel Patriarch, August 20th 1800

⁴⁵⁶ 'General Don's Report on the Island of Jersey November 16th 1807', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 47-48

the most hated of the institutions of Old England'.⁴⁵⁷ In Parliament, the practice was chiefly opposed by a mixture of Whigs and Evangelicals,⁴⁵⁸ who decried flogging as being 'as unnecessary as it was cruel and disgraceful',⁴⁵⁹ and protested that it 'ought [not] to be inflicted on any person who had not entirely forfeited all pretensions to honour'. Indeed, the Channel Islands may be regarded as having served as a 'test case' for military reform: Whitbread having made reference to the gaol of St. Helier as the only one 'crowded with soldiers imprisoned...in lieu of flogging'.⁴⁶⁰ However, while the post-1811 alterations to the Militia Act were to render the British auxiliaries subject to the same punishments as their counterparts in the bailiwicks,⁴⁶¹ this did not entirely silence the 'Traditionalists'. Although the maximum number of lashes that could be awarded by courts-martial was fixed at 300 – commutable, on appeal, to 'indefinite service abroad'⁴⁶² – it was still widely believed that, with respect to the Militia – 'nothing but the terror of the lash' could ensure compliance.⁴⁶³

Troop Health

Important though it may have been to ensure a high standard of discipline amongst both the regulars and the militia, the Commanders-in-Chief were also quick to recognise the need to improve the general health of the troops under

⁴⁵⁷ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, 2nd Edition, (Harmondsworth, 1968), cited in J. Dinwiddy, 'The Early Nineteenth-Century Campaign Against Flogging in the Army' *EHR* 97:383 (1982) 309

⁴⁵⁸ E.E. Steiner, 'Separating the Soldier from the Citizen: Ideology and Criticism of Corporal Punishment in the British Armies, 1790-1815' *SH* 8:1 (1983) 19-20

⁴⁵⁹ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. XX (1811) p. 320-322

⁴⁶⁰ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol. XXV (1813) p. 131

⁴⁶¹ Steiner, 'Separating the Soldier from the Citizen', pp. 33-34

⁴⁶² Dinwiddy, 'Campaign Against Flogging in the Army', pp. 313-314

⁴⁶³ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, Vol. XXV (1813) p. 131

their command.⁴⁶⁴ Again, attempts had been made in previous years to improve the general situation: most notably in 1779, when Conway had requisitioned both the civilian hospital – which also served as the poor house – and a country house for the use of the troops.⁴⁶⁵ Although such a policy had met with success in Malta and Madeira, where the military had been able to take over numerous monasteries and religious houses,⁴⁶⁶ few private buildings in the Channel Islands offered the requisite amount of habitable space. Indeed, while construction on Fort George had commenced before the American War of Independence, this complex – intended as a replacement for the antiquated Castle Cornet – remained only partially complete in 1792.⁴⁶⁷ Moreover, while the construction of new barracks at St. Ouen and Grouville provided accommodation for around 1,400 troops,⁴⁶⁸ less than ten years elapsed before the ‘evil situation’ of these facilities made it necessary for them to undergo a significant refit and a partial reconstruction.⁴⁶⁹

In addition to the provision of ‘official’ accommodation, the expansion of the local garrisons also led to an attempt by the military authorities to implement the policy which had been formerly adopted by Conway.⁴⁷⁰ The day after the 59th Regt. of Foot arrived in Jersey in January 1793, Falle informed Dundas that he had summoned an emergency meeting of the States, and that he would ‘endeavour to procure the Hospital for the troops’,⁴⁷¹ but it is evident that the idea was not greeted with a positive reception. Over two months later, no

⁴⁶⁴ M. Duffy, ‘The Foundations of British Naval Power’, in Duffy, *The Military Revolution and the State*, pp. 71-72; Jones, ‘The Military Revolution’, pp. 32-33

⁴⁶⁵ Platt and Mesch, ‘Mont Orgueil’, *ABSJ* 29:1 (2005) 104

⁴⁶⁶ Gregory, *Malta*, pp. 249-250; and *Madeira*, p. 57 and p. 61

⁴⁶⁷ F.B. Tupper, *The Chronicles of Castle Cornet, with Details of its Nine Years’ Siege During the Civil War, and Frequent Notices of the Channel Islands* (London, 1851) p. VIII

⁴⁶⁸ Platt and Mesch, ‘Mont Orgueil’, 103-104

⁴⁶⁹ *SJA*, A/A1/1, Letter of July 22nd 1807

⁴⁷⁰ *TNA*, HO 99/1, Dundas to Falle and Brown, January 12th 1793

⁴⁷¹ *TNA*, HO 98/3, Falle to Dundas, January 20th 1793

progress had yet been made on the issue: Craig having informed Dundas that he would 'take some favourable opportunity of giving the States to understand how dissatisfactory their conduct has appeared to His Majesty'.⁴⁷² Moreover, the official response from the Privy Council – despite its 'businesslike' tone – made it clear that the failure of the States to accord with the Lieutenant-Governor's proposal risked a serious breakdown in relations between Jersey and Westminster. Not only was it said that the transcript of the proceedings had been read with 'no small degree of concern', but the conduct of the States was described as having 'not tended to impress His Majesty's mind with the most favourable opinion of their sentiments, or of their gratitude for that regard to their welfare which His Majesty on all occasions has shown'.⁴⁷³

As was the case in the majority of contemporary military bases, the close proximity of the garrison and the civilian population created an ideal vector for the spread of a variety of infectious diseases. In 1775, an outbreak of dysentery – referred to by contemporaries as the 'Bloody Flux' – amongst the Highlanders quartered at Fort George had spread to the local population, and by 1778-79, had reached epidemic levels throughout Guernsey.⁴⁷⁴ Similarly, the various reinforcements sent to the Channel Islands during the early years of the Great French War were often weakened by infection; 'a fatal disorder' being reported amongst the 82nd, 109th and 112th Regts. of Foot⁴⁷⁵ and a 'dangerous epidemic distemper' amongst the 45th, 3rd/60th, 92nd, 94th and 102nd Regts. of Foot.⁴⁷⁶ It is unclear as to what diseases were present, but it was stated that the 109th Regt 'though much mended, til continues to lose men', while the 92nd, 94th and 102nd

⁴⁷² Ibid, Craig to Dundas, March 26th 1793

⁴⁷³ Ibid, Anon to Falle, February 20th, 1793

⁴⁷⁴ Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port', p. 72

⁴⁷⁵ TNA, WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, March 19th 1795

⁴⁷⁶ TNA, WO 1/602, Small to Amherst, August 26th and September 3rd 1794

Regts. 'could not, and will not for several months to come, produce one hundred men fit to use their arms'.⁴⁷⁷ In light of these issues, some of Don's earliest actions in Jersey included: a full inspection of the island's barracks, the construction of new troop hospitals at Grouville and St. Ouen,⁴⁷⁸ and the introduction of regular fumigation, inspection and white-washing of facilities.⁴⁷⁹

The pressing nature of these latter reforms – particularly the sanitisation of the barracks and hospitals – may be further illustrated through reference to additional reports submitted by Don in the months after his assuming command at Jersey. In late 1806, he decried the state of the hospital of the 101st Regt. of Foot, highlighting 'the impossibility of accommodating all of the sick in the hospital and barracks' at a time when no less than sixty officers, ncos and rank-and-file were either sick or injured.⁴⁸⁰ Similarly, the hospital attached to the barracks at St. Ouen was reported as having been constructed 'for only thirty patients; forty less than allowed in the King's Regulations', even though the complex was designed to accommodate up to 700 troops.⁴⁸¹ Furthermore, it is likely that such issues were exacerbated by a lax attitude to troop health amongst the officer corps, Don exhibiting – at least in the early years – a particularly critical opinion of certain of his subordinates. For example, following the deaths of a lieutenant and seven privates at the St. Lawrence barracks between December 1806 and March 1807, Don argued that the losses could have been prevented by the implementation of recommendations made several months earlier by the regimental staff surgeon.⁴⁸²

⁴⁷⁷ *TNA*, WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, March 19th 1795

⁴⁷⁸ *SJA*, A/A1/2, Letter of October 29th 1806

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid*, Letter of August 4th, 1808

⁴⁸⁰ *SJA*, A/A1/2, Letters of October 14th and November 14th 1806

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid*, Letter of December 5th 1806

⁴⁸² *Ibid*, Letter of March 27th 1807

Perhaps more dangerous than the local spread of disease was that of imported sickness: a problem to which the Channel Islands – by virtue of their vibrant maritime trade – were particularly exposed. Throughout the eighteenth century, the local government had been forced to take action against such threats, establishing quarantines against plague in 1711 and 1720, and undertaking mass inoculations against smallpox in 1755 and 1786.⁴⁸³ However, it was the Great French War which ultimately revealed the danger posed to the security of the bailiwicks by external diseases, particularly as a result of the regular rotation of the garrison. In May 1808 for example, the 2nd/34th Regt. of Foot reported an outbreak of ophthalmia which was found to have originated at the unit's previous barracks at Hilson,⁴⁸⁴ and which became so extensive in the following years that a number of farm buildings had to be requisitioned as isolation barracks.⁴⁸⁵ Similarly, April 1810 found the 2nd/8th Regt. of Foot decimated by Walcheren Fever,⁴⁸⁶ leaving Jersey dependent on the 4th Garrison Battalion and the 3rd Royal Veterans Battalion for its defence;⁴⁸⁷ moreover, the outbreak soon spread to other units, with the 27th and 77th Regts. of Foot both being reported as 'very sickly' and severely reduced in strength.⁴⁸⁸

While these appear to have been the only large-scale epidemics to have affected the Islands' garrisons during the period under discussion, Don's tenure also witnessed a number of small-scale outbreaks which jeopardised the effectiveness of the troops. For example, in March 1807, twenty-three men of

⁴⁸³ Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port', pp. 72-75

⁴⁸⁴ *SJA*, A/A1/1, Letter of May 28th 1808

⁴⁸⁵ *SJA*, A/A1/4, Letter of September 12th 1811

⁴⁸⁶ Considerable debate surrounds the modern identification of 'Walcheren Fever'. However, it is likely that it was combination of malaria, typhus, typhoid and dysentery, rather than a single disease. See M.R. Howard, 'Walcheren 1809: A Medical Catastrophe', *BMJ* 319 (1999) 1642-1645

⁴⁸⁷ Although the 2nd/57th, 2nd/62nd and 2nd/96th Regts. of Foot were also stationed in the Island at this time, they were described as being 'mere skeletons'.

⁴⁸⁸ *SJA*, A/A1/3, Letters of April 24th and August 9th 1810

the 34th Regt. of Foot were listed as suffering from ‘intermittent fever’⁴⁸⁹ – most likely a form of malaria⁴⁹⁰ – while in May 1808, 123 men of the 2nd/47th Regt. of Foot were reported sick,⁴⁹¹ with forty-four remaining ‘inactive’ five months later.⁴⁹² Although such numbers may appear insignificant, it must be remembered that the paper strength of the garrison was, as a matter of course, vastly at odds with its active manpower. In a report of April 1807, both the 3rd/1st and the 2nd/90th Regts. of Foot were both seriously deficient: not only could they furnish only 150 and 250 ‘active’ men each, but ‘raw recruits’ accounted for seventeen and sixty-one percent of their respective strengths.⁴⁹³ This serves to emphasise the fact that the Channel Islands were commonly employed as a ‘proving ground’ for inexperienced regular troops; in both 1807 and 1808, the Jersey *schuyts*⁴⁹⁴ (see chapter seven) were regularly reported as having brought recruits from the Isle of Wight’.⁴⁹⁵

In closing the subject of troop health, at least some mention must be made of the issue of food supplies: a topic which – as with matters of discipline – will be examined in greater detail with respect to its relevance to the maintenance of public order (see chapter five). Again, the Channel Islands appear to have compared favourably with contemporary bases: while Minorca remained almost entirely dependent on Sardinia, Italy and Sicily⁴⁹⁶ – the latter of which was ‘scarcely [able to] produce enough to feed itself’⁴⁹⁷ – Jersey’s trade balance remained strong. Indeed, the records reveal that 1806 was a particularly

⁴⁸⁹ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of March 20th 1807

⁴⁹⁰ Howard, ‘Walcheren 1809’, 1643

⁴⁹¹ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of May 31st 1808

⁴⁹² SJA, A/A5/2, Letter of October 22nd 1808

⁴⁹³ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of April 26th, 1807

⁴⁹⁴ The schuyt was a flat-bottomed sail-boat or barge of Dutch design.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid, Letters of November 3rd 1807 and January 20th 1808

⁴⁹⁶ Gregory, *Minorca*, p. 202

⁴⁹⁷ Gregory, *Sicily*, p. 37

successful one for the Island's merchants: 600 tons of potatoes, 833 pipes and 705 hogsheads of cider, and 765 cattle being exported to Britain, partly for the use of the army.⁴⁹⁸ Furthermore, it is evident that Don took particular care to ensure the adequate provisioning of the troops: both by securing the regular import of supplies from Britain⁴⁹⁹ and collating regular returns of stores of meat, dairy, grains and spirits.⁵⁰⁰ In addition, both Fort Regent and Elizabeth Castle were well-provisioned: the former holding six months' rations for 2,000 men,⁵⁰¹ and the latter (in mid-1813) with 336 barrels of flour, 850 bags of biscuit, 1,684 bushels of pease, 450 barrels of pork, and 6,682 gallons of rum.⁵⁰²

However, while it is clear that the military authorities ultimately succeeded in their attempts to secure and maintain an adequate stockpile of provisions, due recognition must be given to the role played by the Royal Navy in safeguarding the transport of supplies. The first half of the Great French War had found the Channel Islands under considerable pressure: in March 1797, the French corvette *Tantick* captured a convoy⁵⁰³ transporting cattle and oats to Guernsey,⁵⁰⁴ while another vessel transporting cattle to Jersey was captured in June of the same year.⁵⁰⁵ Thus, it became necessary for several vessels on the Channel Islands' station to be diverted from other duties in order to serve as convoy escorts; in December 1799, for example, the *Spiteful* (brig, 14 guns) and the hired vessel *Rowcliffe* (cutter, 18 guns) were detached from service with *La*

⁴⁹⁸ A.E. Ragg, *A Popular History of Jersey, General, Constitutional and Military, from the Earliest Times to the End of 1895* (Jersey, 1895) pp. 109-110

⁴⁹⁹ SJA, A/A1/6, Letters of January 22nd and 31st 1813, and February 20th 1814

⁵⁰⁰ SJA, L/F/95/B/6, 'Don to Nicolle Concerning the Quantity of Food Provisions in Store in Case of Enemy Attack on the Island', September 27th 1811

⁵⁰¹ SJA, A/A1/3, Letter of July 16th 1810, [Note: no weights or measures are given for these figures.]

⁵⁰² SJA, L/F/95/B/26/4, 'Correspondence Concerning Food Provisions in Garrison Stores, Including a Return of Provisions from Elizabeth Castle', June 7th 1813

⁵⁰³ The convoy included the brigs *Betsey*, *Providence*, *Manger*, and *Royal Volunteer*, along with two other unnamed vessels of unknown type

⁵⁰⁴ TNA, HO 69/17/43, De St. Croix to D'Auvergne, March 25th 1797

⁵⁰⁵ TNA, FO 95/605/87, D'Auvergne to Windham, June 27th 1797

Correspondence.⁵⁰⁶ While it is impossible to give any indication of the exact impact of the measure with respect to the safeguarding of convoys between the south coast of Britain and the Channel Islands, some indication may be given by reference to studies of British merchantmen. As highlighted by Davey, estimates for the period 1803-15⁵⁰⁷ have suggested that only 0.6 percent of British ships sailing as part of a convoy were lost to the enemy, compared with 6.8% of those vessels that sailed without the protection of a naval escort.⁵⁰⁸

Overall Assessment

Taken in isolation, it is evident that manpower alone provided the Channel Islands with little more than a theoretical or 'illusory' level of security: had the French succeeded in effecting an invasion such as that envisioned in 1794 (see chapter three), it is likely that they would have met with success. As has been said, only around 2,000 militiamen and 4,000 regulars could be counted upon at any one time for the defence of either Bailiwick; by contrast, the spring of 1794 saw a force of 20,000 infantry assemble on the opposite coast.⁵⁰⁹ While it remains purely conjectural as to whether such a large body of men could have been transported to the bailiwicks, it is worth recalling that De Rullecourt's initial landing force in 1781 had consisted of only 1,500 men, with artillery in proportion. It was only by a series of fortuitous accidents (from the perspective of the defenders) that he had been prevented from landing the majority of these forces, and had Corbet been captured a few minutes earlier, no 'official' alarm

⁵⁰⁶ TNA, FO 95/611, 'Disposition of the Vessels Under the Command of D'Auvergne', December 1799

⁵⁰⁷ According to the Convoy Act (1803) all British were required – subject to special license granted by the Privy Council – to sail as part of a convoy or else forfeit the loss of all claim to insurance in case of capture. See Avery, 'The Naval Protection of Britain's Maritime Trade', p. 9

⁵⁰⁸ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 233

⁵⁰⁹ SJA, L/F/08/H/8, 'Copy of an Extract from the Register of the French Republic re. a Proposed Invasion of the Channel Islands', January 31st 1794

could have been sent to the garrison.⁵¹⁰ On that basis, even if Rossignol had been able to land only 5,000 men in each Bailiwick, rather than the projected 10,000, it is likely that they would have proved more than sufficient to secure both Islands, especially if provided with artillery and naval support.

However, while it is true that the men of the local militia were never regarded as the equal of the regulars, their importance in relation to the defence of the Channel Islands should not be dismissed out of hand.⁵¹¹ This is particularly true with respect to Don's years in command of Jersey, when so many 'active' men were pressed into service on the military works and roads (see chapters three and four). With priority being given to the completion of these improvements, the pressures of garrison duty were increasingly being felt by 'reserve' regiments dominated by raw recruits and old soldiers (see above). The potential risk of over-reliance on the service of such men is illustrated by the medical reports of the 3rd Royal Veterans Battalion; in spring 1808, only the first two companies were 'fit for castle duty only', the remaining eight being recommended for 'manning the coastal towers'.⁵¹² Moreover, a significant numbers of garrison troops were regularly found to be wholly unfit for service: in April 1802, eleven men were discharged from the 43rd Regt. of Foot in Guernsey,⁵¹³ while in June 1810, a total of 112 men of the Jersey garrison were similarly dismissed from His Majesty's Service.⁵¹⁴

In light of these various factors, it is clear that the garrison of the Channel Islands was often considerably under strength, its manpower reduced by

⁵¹⁰ Downie and Ford, *The Battle of Jersey*, pp. 23-25

⁵¹¹ *SJA*, A/A1/2, Letter of December 25th 1806 and *SJA*, A/A5/2, Letter of March 4th 1809

⁵¹² *SJA*, A/A1/1, Letter of April 26th 1808

⁵¹³ Schwanenfeld, 'The Foundation of British Strength', p. 175

⁵¹⁴ *SJA*, A/A1/3, Letter of June 1st 1810

disease, secondment, and the transfer of men to overseas service. Within this context, the Channel Islands militiamen can be seen to have played a vital role as a secondary line of defence, and while the force that mustered in 1793 may have been dismissed as a liability,⁵¹⁵ their effectiveness as a fighting force had changed beyond all recognition by 1815. Indeed, it is appropriate to adapt Bartlett's conclusion with respect to the regular army, and state that the men over whom Don and Doyle exercised command bore only a superficial resemblance to their forebears.⁵¹⁶ At a review of the island's militia regiments in early 1813, both Lieutenant-Governors expressed their 'entire satisfaction' with the 'discipline and conduct' of the troops,⁵¹⁷ while an inspection of Jersey's 'Battalion of Boys' found that the men were '[able to] move through the exercise and evolutions...with an extraordinary degree of accuracy'.⁵¹⁸ However, it is particularly interesting to note that improvements to the militia were noted even by French commentators; in 1805, De Beauchamp⁵¹⁹ described Jersey as being defended by '8,000 men of excellent militia...all preparing with ardor for the coming war, and well-attached to the British government'.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁵ TNA, HO 98/24, Col. Thomas Dundas to Sir David Dundas, February 1st 1793

⁵¹⁶ Bartlett, 'The British Army, 1793-1815', Abstract

⁵¹⁷ *Guernsey Star*, August 20th 1813

⁵¹⁸ SJA, A/A1/6, Letter of October 4th 1813

⁵¹⁹ Alphonse de Beauchamp (1767-1832) served as a member of the Ministry of Police during the Consulate, being responsible for superintendence of the press.

⁵²⁰ A. De Beauchamp, *Histoire de la Guerre de la Vendée et des Chouans*, 3 Tomes (Paris, 1806) Tome I, p. 67

Chapter Three – The ‘Big Guns’: Forts, Towers and Batteries

As well as overseeing the creation of an effective, well-armed defensive force, it was also necessary for the local authorities to ensure that the Channel Islands’ coastal fortifications were likewise placed in good order. Although such defences had been a feature of the local landscape since the seventeenth century,⁵²¹ the majority of these – particularly the fortresses of *Mont Orgueil* and Elizabeth Castle (Jersey) and Castle Cornet (Guernsey) – had been rendered obsolete by the start of the Great French War (see below). Unfortunately, in making an assessment of the level of success achieved by the local Commanders-in-Chief with respect to the modernisation of the Channel Islands’ ‘heavy’ defences, it is likely that any conclusions drawn shall prove inconclusive. As is the case with contemporary fortification programmes undertaken in the southern counties of England – particularly Kent and Sussex – it must be acknowledged that the planned improvements to the Channel Islands’ defences were not fully realised until after 1815. Consequently, as with the assessment of the reform of the local garrisons and militia (see chapter two), consideration must be given to the fact that the fortifications were never tested against a determined assault,⁵²² and most never fired a shot in anger.⁵²³

Unfortunately, the fact that the Channel Islands remained untroubled by ‘glorious sieges, victories or proud failures’,⁵²⁴ gave rise to the belief – popular amongst nineteenth-century writers – that the fortifications represented a

⁵²¹ Morieux, *The Channel*, p. 120

⁵²² V. Coysh, ‘Fort George: Past and Present’ *TSG* 21:5 (1985) 667-668

⁵²³ On Christmas Day 1797, one of Alderney’s coastal batteries participated in the capture of a French privateer. Three shots were fired by the artillerymen: one missed, one passed through the enemy’s sails, and the third killed a French crewman. [A full account of the incident is provided by TNA WO 1/606, Le Mesurier to Dundas, December 25th 1797]

⁵²⁴ W. Davies, *Fort Regent: A History* (Jersey, 1972) p. 37

‘squandering of resources’ and an ‘injudicious expense’.⁵²⁵ However, this view was based upon the erroneous assumption that ultimate victory over France had been inevitable, a myth strengthened by the traditional presentation of Trafalgar as having ended the threat of invasion from the Continent.⁵²⁶ In reality, ‘most naval personnel understood that British command of the sea was neither secure nor permanent’, and by 1807, the strength of the sea fencibles – the maritime volunteer force created in 1803 to assist in coastal defence – stood at approximately 15,000.⁵²⁷ Ultimately, the anxiety felt by British ministers with respect to national security was salved only after news reached London of the total failure of Napoleon’s Russian campaign.⁵²⁸ Prior to 1812, Horse Guards continued to plan for a potential landing by up to 300,000 enemy troops.⁵²⁹ an assessment based on the fact that the French Navy had been growing ‘both in size and ambition’ since 1808, at which time Napoleon possessed at least eighty ships-of-the-line (see chapter seven).⁵³⁰

Moreover, any claim that the fortification of the Channel Islands can be dismissed as a ‘white elephant’ is further undermined by the fact that a number of valuable improvements had been set in motion even before the outbreak of the Great French War. By 1793, the initial chain of Conway Towers around the coast of Guernsey had been completed, and twenty-two out of thirty-two towers

⁵²⁵ de la Gravière, *Guerres Maritimes Sous la République et L’Empire*, cited in J.F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866-80* (Stanford, California, 1997) p. 24; W. Cobbett, *Rural Rides Vol. I* (London, 1832) pp. 185-187; V. Coysh, ‘Nineteenth Century Defences in the Channel Islands’ *TSG* 18:3 (1968) 297-8; Inglis, *The Channel Islands*, pp. 11-13; and G.I.T. Machin, ‘Review of A.G. Jamieson (ed.), *A People of the Sea*’, 109

⁵²⁶ Davey, *In Nelson’s Wake*, p. 10

⁵²⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 137 and 167

⁵²⁸ J. Black, *Other Pasts, Different Presents, Alternative Futures* (Bloomington, Indiana, 2015) p. 124

⁵²⁹ R. Knight, ‘British Defensive Strategy at Sea in the War Against Napoleon’ in N.A.M. Rodger, J.R. Dancy, B. Darnell and E. Wilson (eds.), *Strategy and the Sea: Essays in Honour of John B. Hattendorf* (Martlesham, 2016) pp. 90-91

⁵³⁰ Davey, *In Nelson’s Wake*, p. 278

planned for Jersey had likewise been constructed,⁵³¹ and their potential value was highlighted by the reaction in Britain to a number of erroneous reports of French attacks on the Channel Islands. In late April 1793, news reached Plymouth that 'a violent cannonade' had been heard off Jersey and that the local alarm beacons were lit; in response, the 11th and 25th Regts. of Foot, in company with 100 artillerymen, made ready to launch a counterattack, and a cutter dispatched to verify the report.⁵³² Likewise in March 1794, *The Times* had 'the pleasure to contradict...in the most unequivocal terms...a very general report [which] prevailed in the City that Jersey was taken by the French', although it was acknowledged that there remained 'every reason to suppose' that such an attack was imminent.⁵³³

However, while it is clear that the British government regarded the threat to the Channel Islands as both imminent and severe, the situation 'on the ground' in 1793 was far from secure. According to Falle, not only was the Jersey garrison supported by only seven companies of invalids and one thousand effective militiamen, but the Island possessed 'no place of strength to which we could retire [in the event of an attack] until the arrival of succour'.⁵³⁴ Moreover, in spite of both the Committee for the Defence of the Island and the States of Jersey having petitioned the British government for additional troops and ships,⁵³⁵ the response from Whitehall was far from desirable. While recognising the 'very satisfactory' report given by Dundas concerning the militia, it was regretted that 'the various services now to be performed, both naval and military, will

⁵³¹ TNA, WO 1/607, Conway to Portland, October 15th 1794

⁵³² *The Times*, May 1st 1793

⁵³³ *The Times*, March 18th 1794

⁵³⁴ TNA, HO 98/3, Falle to Dundas, (Undated) 1792

⁵³⁵ Ibid, States of the Island of Jersey, December 31st 1792

not...admit of compliance with the wishes of the inhabitants',⁵³⁶ an observation echoed by Saumarez, then stationed off Guernsey in command of a small squadron.⁵³⁷ Although this force was certainly a valuable addition to the local defences, the pressure then facing the Royal Navy was such that in the opinion of the future admiral, he might rely upon the reinforcement of only 'an old sixty-four' and an unspecified number of frigates.⁵³⁸

The Fortification of the Coasts: Pre-Existing Defences

As has been already mentioned, the fortification of the Channel Islands during the Great French War was rooted in the programme of innovations drawn up by Conway in 1778; however, the implementation of the earlier programme had relied heavily upon funding from the British government.⁵³⁹ While the Channel Islands had received £10,000 per annum during the American War of Independence, such funding fell away rapidly in peacetime, decreasing to £4,000 in 1784, £1,100 in 1785 and Nil in 1786.⁵⁴⁰ It is true that the British government still met the cost of maintaining the garrisons and supplying arms and accoutrements to the militia (see chapter two), but improvement of the fortifications was regarded as being of secondary importance. Consequently, while the fifteen coastal towers commissioned for construction in Guernsey (see appendix d) were completed by 1779,⁵⁴¹ work on Fort George – commenced in 1780 – slowed to a crawl. Although intended to replace the antiquated Castle

⁵³⁶ TNA, HO 98/24, Letter to Dundas from Whitehall, March 1793

⁵³⁷ *HMS Crescent* (fifth-rate, 36 guns), *HMS Druid* (fifth rate, 32-gun), *HMS Liberty* (brig, 16 guns), and the hired vessel *Lion* (cutter, 10 guns)

⁵³⁸ SROI, SA 3/1/2/4, Letter of March 18th 1793

⁵³⁹ Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 26

⁵⁴⁰ Platt and Mesch, 'Mont Orgueil Castle, 101-102

⁵⁴¹ E.J. Grimsley, *The Historical Development of the Martello Tower* (Guernsey, 1988) pp. 17-18

Cornet,⁵⁴² the fort remained only partially completed by 1803,⁵⁴³ and the shortage of wartime funding and labour meant that several improvements proposed in 1809 were not commenced until 1811.⁵⁴⁴ Even so, sufficient progress was made that a report of 1803 described Fort George as having been 'considerably strengthened', the most important improvement being the construction of a bombproof tank capable of holding 12,000 gallons of water.⁵⁴⁵

The lack of peacetime funding likewise rendered the defences of Jersey sorely lacking at the opening of the Great French War: of the thirty-two coastal towers which had been commissioned in 1778, only ten of these had been completed by the end of the American War.⁵⁴⁶ Furthermore, the withdrawal of financial support between 1783 and 1792 meant that only thirteen of the remainder were ever built, and the last of these was not operational until 1797.⁵⁴⁷ Similarly, while a number of other important additions were made to the defences of Jersey during the latter part of the eighteenth century, these differed from the construction of Fort George in that they were focused on reinforcing, rather than replacing, obsolete fortifications. For example, St. Aubin's Fort and Elizabeth Castle – both of which provided protection to the Island's principal harbour – were given additional support on the landward side by the construction of three Conway Towers, and on the seaward side by a battery at *Le Bût* (two 24-pdrs and two 12-pdrs).⁵⁴⁸ However, it was not until 1797 that either the Fort or the Castle received replacements for the antique armament with which they had been supplied since 1742; the former received six 24-pdrs and seven 6-pdrs,

⁵⁴² Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port', p. 65

⁵⁴³ Marr, *History of Guernsey*, p. 158

⁵⁴⁴ TNA, WO 55/809, De Butts, OCRE to Doyle, September 25th 1811

⁵⁴⁵ TNA, WO 1/605, Doyle to Pelham, March 25th 1803 and Anon, 'Report of the Operations Carried on in Order to Strengthen the Position of Fort George', undated

⁵⁴⁶ W.H. Clements, *Towers of Strength: Martello Towers Worldwide* (London, 1998) p. 83

⁵⁴⁷ Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 26

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 85

while the latter not only received new guns, but its complement was increased to sixty-six pieces of ordnance.⁵⁴⁹

The aftermath of the invasion of 1781 was also noteworthy for having encouraged the fortification of a number of other key sites in Jersey, particularly those small bays wherein an enemy might conduct a discrete, small-scale landing. For example, the defences of Rozel Bay – used heavily by smaller merchant craft – were upgraded by the addition of two batteries: one at the existing militia guardhouse of *Le Câte!*; the other on the headland of *Le Nez de Guet* (see map m). Similarly, the existing defences of Bouley Bay – highly accessible to small, shallow-draught vessels – received extensive modifications in the early years of the Great French War, since L'Etacquerel Fort (on the eastern flank) and Fort Leicester (on the western flank) were not mutually supportive (see map m). Both constructed in the 1740s, the armament of these forts had long been rendered obsolete; as a result, the former had its six small-calibre guns replaced with two traversing 24-pdrs, while the latter was equipped with a pair of 12-pdrs. This new armament, together with the single 12-pdr gun mounted at the militia guardhouse, created an interlocking field of fire, while L'Etacquerel Fort was also rendered near-impregnable by the addition of a ditch twenty-one feet deep and twelve to twenty-four feet wide.⁵⁵⁰

Finally, while it may not have been on the scale of Fort George, it is important to highlight the fact that the years before the Great French War had seen crucial work undertaken with respect to the fortification of the Town Hill. Though often regarded as the greatest achievement of Don's tenure as Lieutenant-Governor,

⁵⁴⁹ Mjr F.A.L. De Gruchy, 'The Militia and the Military Role of Jersey in History', *ABSJ* 16:4 (1956) 368

⁵⁵⁰ Faggioni, *Fortifications*, pp. 93-96

the later development of this site – particularly the construction of Fort Regent – was inspired by earlier work overseen by Conway, with the assistance of Captains Mulcaster and Eveleigh.⁵⁵¹ These men not only organised the construction of two redoubts overlooking the town of Saint Helier,⁵⁵² but had also produced the first plans for the complete fortification of both the Town Hill and South Hill (see map g). Indeed, it was not for another twenty years that Elizabeth Castle was acknowledged to have ceased to be ‘a formidable defence’ in the face of modern artillery,⁵⁵³ and even in 1811, Don remained convinced that it might serve as ‘a post of the greatest importance’ in support of Fort Regent.⁵⁵⁴ However, while it is true that many of Mulcaster’s recommendations were incorporated into Don’s later plans, and that the respective designs are relatively similar (see maps h and i), it must be acknowledged both were obliged to work within the topography of the site.⁵⁵⁵

The Purpose of the Defences

Based on the sheer volume of surviving intelligence reports (see chapter eight), is clear that the Channel Islands’ proximity to the Breton-Norman coast allowed them to be exploited as a base from which to monitor enemy activity. In August 1794, for example, a convoy of 140 enemy vessels was sighted off Alderney, and Le Mesurier declared that it was ‘very probable that [Saumarez] must have destroyed many of them had [he] not been called away that day’.⁵⁵⁶ Similarly, intelligence communicated by D’Auvergne in December 1801 reported that

⁵⁵¹ Served successively as OCRE (Island of Jersey)

⁵⁵² A. Gibb, L. Myers, F. Corbet (eds.), *A Conservation Statement for Fort Regent* (Jersey, 1996) p. 16

⁵⁵³ SJA, L/F/22/E/39, ‘Printed Letter to the Inhabitants of the *Vingtaine de la Ville*’, March 6th 1805

⁵⁵⁴ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of May 23rd 1811

⁵⁵⁵ Davies, *Fort Regent*, p. 69

⁵⁵⁶ SROI, SA 3/1/2/3, Letter of August 18th 1794

preparations were being made at Brest for an expedition to St. Domingo: 20,000 men, fifteen line-of-battle ships and an 84-gun ship being already assembled, with four frigates and 1,200 men *en route* from Le Havre.⁵⁵⁷ Naturally, however, this advantage could be enjoyed only as long as the Channel Islands remained in British hands, and it was observed that they particularly vulnerable to assault from a number of points on the enemy coast (see chapter seven).⁵⁵⁸ Moreover, in common with Sicily⁵⁵⁹ and the south coast of England,⁵⁶⁰ the multiplicity of small bays around the coast of the Channel Islands made it difficult to predict where the French might attempt a landing.⁵⁶¹ Consequently, the local fortifications were designed not only to provide support for the defenders, but to convince enemy agents – believed to be active in both bailiwicks⁵⁶² – that any invasion would be met by concentrated, overwhelming firepower.⁵⁶³

Due to the potential vulnerability of the Channel Islands to multiple simultaneous assaults and the hazardous nature of local navigation,⁵⁶⁴ efforts were made to incorporate natural features – reefs, currents and rip tides – into plans for the improved coastal defence.⁵⁶⁵ One of the best examples of the synthesis of natural and man-made fortification is provided by the Conway Tower constructed on La Rocco, a tidal island approximately half a mile off Jersey's west coast, on the southern flank of St. Ouen's Bay. As was

⁵⁵⁷ TNA, ADM 1/6035, 'Extract of a Letter from D'Auvergne at Jersey', December 7th 1801

⁵⁵⁸ SJA, L/F/95/B/9, Don to 'My Dear Sir', October 27th 1811

⁵⁵⁹ Gregory, *Sicily*, p. 46

⁵⁶⁰ Longmate, *Island Fortress*, p. 243

⁵⁶¹ SJA, L/F/95/A/2, 'Letter from Don to Spencer Concerning a Report on the Island of Jersey, the Likelihood of an Attack during Autumn or Winter, and the Impossibility of Blockading all Ports between Cherbourg and St. Malo', May 22nd 1806

⁵⁶² *The Times*, October 20th 1794; TNA, HO 98/9, Gordon to Pelham, January 26th 1803; and SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of August 25th 1808

⁵⁶³ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, Gordon to Howard, February 23rd 1796; SJA, A/A1/5, Letter of March 11th 1812; and TNA, PC 1/3794, Don to Anon, 'Secret and Confidential', September 5th 1807

⁵⁶⁴ Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence* vol. I, pp. 132-134

⁵⁶⁵ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 72

highlighted in a report submitted to the States of Jersey, the position of the tower not only protected 'the most favourable part of the bay' from attack, but also enabled the garrison to deliver interlocking fire in conjunction with several existing shore batteries. Moreover, since the stretch of St. Ouen's Bay to the north of Le Rocco was screened by 'extensive beds of rugged rocks', it was concluded that no enemy would be able to land on Jersey's west coast without first subjecting the new tower to 'a long and continued attack'.⁵⁶⁶ This picture was replicated at all of the island's various bays: by 1811, Jersey's coastal towers and batteries were manned by a total of 1,555 troops, including 460 garrisoned in the fortresses, and 425 in the towers.⁵⁶⁷

While it is thus evident that the Channel Islands were potentially able to bring a tremendous volume of firepower to bear against any potential invader,⁵⁶⁸ it must be remembered that the fortifications were not designed to provide an entirely 'passive' form of defence. Rather, it was the clear intent of the successive Commanders-in-Chief to ensure that, should the enemy affect a landing, the fortifications would be able to provide 'active' defence in conjunction with line infantry, light troops and field artillery. This strategic vision was formulated most explicitly by Doyle in 1802, when he spoke of the need to defend the Channel Islands 'from the threshold to the citadel', treating the coastal forts and batteries as the outworks of a great fortress.⁵⁶⁹ Just as the Martello Towers constructed in Kent and Sussex were not intended to prevent a landing, but rather inflict 'immense slaughter' in support of artillery and cavalry,⁵⁷⁰ so the Conway Towers were designed to 'soften up' an attacking force and buy time for the

⁵⁶⁶ SJA, L/F/103/A/1, 'Recommendation in Relation to the Building of a Tower at La Rocco', undated

⁵⁶⁷ SJA, A/A1/4, Letters of February 21st 1811 and March 4th 1811

⁵⁶⁸ SJA, A/A1/5, Letter of November 16th 1811

⁵⁶⁹ 'Speech of Major-General Doyle', reproduced in Sullivan, *General Don*, p.17

⁵⁷⁰ Longmate, *Island Fortress*, p. 278

organisation of a counter-attack. However, it must be noted that the Jersey towers, having been built several years after the Guernsey examples, were constructed to a far more complex design (see appendix d), reflecting an attempt by the engineers to respond to technological developments.⁵⁷¹

With respect to the Guernsey towers, it is likely that the simplicity of their design and the rapidity of their construction were both prompted by the fact that St. Peter Port remained – even after the Great French War – the only deep-water anchorage in the Channel Islands (see chapter six). By contrast, although a number of Conway Towers had been constructed in Jersey by the end of the 1770s, the attempted invasions of 1779 and 1781 (see chapter two) appear to have persuaded the authorities in that island to modify Conway’s original design. Unlike the Guernsey towers, which were built of brick, with walls four feet thick, and with a sloped base to deflect artillery fire, the Jersey towers were built of granite, had walls eight feet thick, and were protected by four machicolated galleries.⁵⁷² Moreover, although the Guernsey towers were eventually provided with a roof-mounted 18-pdr carronades,⁵⁷³ it would seem that they were never intended to serve as anything more than what would now be termed as ‘pill-boxes’.⁵⁷⁴ By contrast, Craig’s 1793 report provides clear evidence that the Jersey towers were viewed as being capable of serving as fortresses in their own right, albeit that it would first be necessary to make several modifications to their armament.

⁵⁷¹ Clements, *Towers of Strength*, p. 83

⁵⁷² Grimsley, *The Martello Tower*, p. 77

⁵⁷³ Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 27

⁵⁷⁴ Davies, *Coastal Towers*, p. 37

In order that the men garrisoned in the towers might be able to stop, rather than simply delay, an advancing enemy, Craig recommended that each should be provided with a single piece of ordnance capable of pouring 'a rapid and heavy fire of canister shot, easily managed, and directed at any point'. At the very least, it was suggested that a 12-pdr carronade would answer the purpose 'extremely well', but he observed that a Cohorn mortar⁵⁷⁵ mounted on a carriage, 'would perhaps be still better'.⁵⁷⁶ As may be seen from Conway's reply, the recommendations received almost universal approval, each tower being provided with a Cohorn – capable of firing shells to a distance of 1,400 yards – and two 1-pdr swivel guns with a range of 1.5 miles. Moreover, while Conway warned that the addition of machicolated galleries to all the towers would incur great expence, and that they would be effective only if 'built with solidity',⁵⁷⁷ it is evident that such concerns were outweighed by the desire for additional protection against mining, since all the Jersey towers received this modification (see appendix d). Indeed, that Craig's modifications were perceived a significant improvement is illustrated by Don's assessment of the towers, the new Lieutenant-Governor describing them as providing 'every advantage in checking and resisting the advances of the enemy'.⁵⁷⁸

In general terms, placement of the Conway Towers closely mirrored that of England's Martello Towers: just as the latter had been erected 'five or six hundred yards apart, and in the most advantageous landing places',⁵⁷⁹ the former fortifications were concentrated in the most vulnerable bays. In Jersey,

⁵⁷⁵ The Cohorn Mortar was a light artillery piece developed by Dutch military engineer Menno, Baron van Coehoorn (1641-1704). Cast as either a 12-pdr or 24-pdr weapon, the Cohorn was still light enough to be transported by four soldiers.

⁵⁷⁶ TNA, HO 98/3, Craig, 'Memoir on the Defence of the Island of Jersey', March 1793

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid, 'Conway to Anon re. Craig's Memorandum on the Defence of Jersey', undated

⁵⁷⁸ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of August 7th 1806

⁵⁷⁹ Longmate, *Island Fortress*, pp. 274-275

for example, they were built chiefly in St. Aubin (three towers), Grouville (six towers) and St. Ouen (three towers), providing additional protection for the island's largest and most heavily-used harbours (see maps j, k and l). However, both Don and Doyle also authorised the construction of six 'true' Martello Towers – three each in Jersey and Guernsey – in order to reinforce key strategic points around their respective coastlines. In Guernsey, the three towers were built on the east coast, one each at Rocquaine, L'Erée and Houmet, while those constructed in Jersey were situated on the south coast, protecting not only St. Aubin's Bay, but also the southern approaches to St. Ouen's Bay and Grouville Bay.⁵⁸⁰ The ability of these latter towers to bring interlocking fire to bear against an approaching enemy is particularly well demonstrated by Icho Tower; its field of fire overlapping with that of Le Hocq, Platte Rocque, and Seymour Towers, as well as seven coastal batteries.⁵⁸¹

Given that the Martello Tower came to be employed in both the Channel Islands and the British Isles as a whole, it is necessary to understand how their strategic use was affected by local considerations. In Sussex and Kent, for example, the new towers were intended not only as safeguards against invasion, but also as a means to reinforce the men of the preventative water guard and the riding officers in their efforts to suppress local smuggling (see chapter seven). Both these forces were corrupt, ill-disciplined, and poorly equipped:⁵⁸² as late as 1809, the former possessed only thirty-nine cutters and sixty-two smaller boats,⁵⁸³ while each riding officer was tasked with patrolling

⁵⁸⁰ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of March 11th 1812

⁵⁸¹ SJA, A/A1/6, Letter of January 5th, 1811

⁵⁸² G. Daly, 'English Smugglers, the Channel, and the Napoleonic Wars, 1800-14', *JBS*, 46:1 (2007) 30-46; and J. Douch, *Flogging Joey's Warriors: How the Royal Navy Fought the Kent and Sussex Smugglers* (Dover, 1985) pp. 29-30

⁵⁸³ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 290

fifty square miles, both night and day, with only a sabre and a pair of pistols with which to defend himself.⁵⁸⁴ Though smuggling was possibly an even greater problem in the Channel Islands – both Don and Doyle appeared desirous to suppress the practice⁵⁸⁵ – it is evident that the Martello Towers were regarded as a purely ‘military’ asset. This was demonstrated by the rejection of a proposal to build a tower on Rousse Rock in St. Brelade’s Bay: despite the fact that such a fortification would ‘command all the passages into the Bay’,⁵⁸⁶ Don concluded that an escarpment, breastwork and battery would provide sufficient protection against an assault from that quarter.⁵⁸⁷

The Invasion Threat: Real or Imagined?

In order to form accurate conclusions as to the effectiveness of the fortification of the Channel Islands during the Great French War, the question must first be asked: ‘were the Islands in any real danger?’ While it is true that the invasion of Britain had been fatally undermined even before Trafalgar,⁵⁸⁸ the threat posed to the Channel Islands after 1805 was far less clear-cut. While critics of the fortification of Kent and Sussex ridiculed the idea that Napoleon might evade the British blockade (see chapter seven), the Channel Islands remained dangerously exposed due to their lack of dedicated naval protection during the autumn and winter.⁵⁸⁹ The severity of the continuing threat was highlighted by successive Commanders-in-Chief, who pledged to ‘give the French a proper

⁵⁸⁴ Douch, *Flogging Joey’s Warriors*, pp. 29-30

⁵⁸⁵ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of August 13th 1806

⁵⁸⁶ Ibid, Letter of September 21st 1806 and A/A5/2, Letter of November 24th 1809

⁵⁸⁷ SJA, A/A1/5, Letter of March 11th 1812

⁵⁸⁸ N.A.M. Rodger, ‘The Significance of Trafalgar: Sea Power and Land Power in the Anglo-French Wars’, in D. Cannadine, (ed.), *Trafalgar in History: A Battle and its Afterlife* (Basingstoke, 2006) p. 83

⁵⁸⁹ Warren to Spencer, August 7th 1796, reproduced in J.S. Corbett and R.-Adm. H.W. Richmond (eds.), *Private Papers of George, Second Earl Spencer, First Lord of the Admiralty, 1794-1801*, 4 Vols. (London, 1924) Vol I, pp. 272-274; and SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of March 28th 1808

reception'⁵⁹⁰ and 'put everything in the best form possible'⁵⁹¹ to 'oppose any hostile attempt to assail this important and valuable post'.⁵⁹² Even after Trafalgar – the news of which caused Doyle to claim that 'the late glorious naval victories have given [these Islands] increased security'⁵⁹³ – French preparations on the opposite coast remained a cause for concern. Not only did Napoleon pour vast resources into rebuilding his shattered navy – setting an 'ambitious goal' of constructing 150 ships-of-the-line⁵⁹⁴ – but the Battle of Jersey (1781) had demonstrated that it would be entirely possible for the French to invade the Channel Islands without the support of a battlefleet.⁵⁹⁵

The correspondence of the respective Lieutenant-Governors provides further evidence of the severity with which the local authorities viewed the French threat during the post-Trafalgar period. Just over a month after the battle, Doyle warned that Dielette – only twelve miles distant from Alderney and Guernsey – had undergone sufficient improvements to enable it to accommodate a large force of gunboats. He also expressed his frustration that two regiments (to the amount of 1,300 men) had been removed from the garrison so soon after Saumarez' squadron had been reduced to the extent that he could 'no longer spare a frigate to watch the port of Cherbourg'.⁵⁹⁶ Similar concerns were expressed by Don, who predicted that in the wake of Trafalgar, the French must necessarily 'confine their attacks against...Jersey and Guernsey, and the [English] coast opposite Boulogne'.⁵⁹⁷ Likewise, he declared that 'the only effect' of the 1808 Orders in Council had been that of 'drawing the enemy's

⁵⁹⁰ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, 'Report on French Activity', undated

⁵⁹¹ Ibid, Gordon to Howard, February 23rd 1796

⁵⁹² SJA, L/F/08/A/32, Order from HQ, Guernsey, April 5th 1795

⁵⁹³ TNA, WO 1/605, Doyle to Hobart, November 24th 1805

⁵⁹⁴ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, pp. 111-112; and Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 12

⁵⁹⁵ S.W. Bisson, 'Plans for the Capture of the Channel Islands in 1794', *ABSJ* 20:4 (1972) 388-89

⁵⁹⁶ TNA, WO 1/605, Doyle to Hobart, November 24th 1805

⁵⁹⁷ TNA, HO 98/11, Don to Portland, May 22nd 1806

attention towards these Islands',⁵⁹⁸ and that as late as 1809, Jersey and her sister islands 'must be constantly exposed to unexpected and sudden attacks'.⁵⁹⁹ Although it is true that such concerns were not unique to the Channel Islands,⁶⁰⁰ they were rendered more ominous in this case by the difficulty of summoning large numbers of reinforcements from Britain, which might take more than a day to arrive (see below).⁶⁰¹

Although many scholars have advanced the claim that Napoleon 'never seriously contemplated invading Britain after 1805', relying instead on 'costly and inefficient indirect means to attempt to defeat her',⁶⁰² contemporary opinion was clearly at variance with this assessment. Throughout the post-Trafalgar period, both Lieutenant-Governors remained convinced of Napoleon's belief that the conquest of the Channel Islands would provide a potential solution to his inability to wrest local maritime superiority from the Royal Navy.⁶⁰³ In 1806 and 1809 respectively, Don and Doyle expressed concerns that the French might seek to exploit Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney as 'stepping-stones for an army destined to invade England', and specifically for attacks on key towns and ports on the south coast.⁶⁰⁴ Unbeknownst to the Lieutenant-Governors, the Committee of Public Safety had indeed approved of such a scheme as part of the plan for the 1794 invasion, it being suggested that the bailiwicks might be

⁵⁹⁸ SJA, L/F/95/A/35, Don to Doyle, July 2nd 1808

⁵⁹⁹ SJA, L/F/95/A/38, 'Don to 'Gentlemen' Concerning a Report Made on the State of Jersey in March 1808', August 13th 1809

⁶⁰⁰ N. Longmate, *Island Fortress: The Defence of Great Britain, 1603-1945* (London, 1991) p. 243; Gregory, *Sicily*, p. 46

⁶⁰¹ TNA, HO 98/3, Conway to Anon, March 1793

⁶⁰² R. Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon, 1807-1815* (New Haven, Connecticut, 1996) p. 3

⁶⁰³ SJA, L/F/95/A/38, Don to 'Gentlemen', August 13th 1809 and L/F/95/B/9, Don to 'My Dear Sir', October 27th 1811

⁶⁰⁴ TNA, HO 98/11, Don to Portland, May 22nd 1806; WO 1/605, 'Extract from Doyle's Report', February 6th 1809

used as a base from which to attack the Isle of Wight.⁶⁰⁵ In addition, the militarization of Cherbourg served to reignite invasion fears:⁶⁰⁶ in 1813, a passenger recently landed from Caen reported that Napoleon ‘had taken a view of the Channel Islands from Jerbourg and Flamanville, and been particularly inquisitive respecting Alderney’.⁶⁰⁷

The Planned Invasion of 1794

Throughout the closing months of 1793, the Committee of Public Safety received a number of proposals for the invasion of Great Britain and the Channel Islands.⁶⁰⁸ Although the majority were rejected, the decision was taken on September 22nd to assemble 100,000 men for an expedition to Britain,⁶⁰⁹ and only the Quiberon Mutiny and the royalists’ crossing of the Loire (see chapter nine), forced the suspension of the operation.⁶¹⁰ In its place, the decision was taken for an attack to be launched against the Channel Islands:⁶¹¹ command being divided between General Rossignol – commander of the *Armée de l’Ouest* – and Rear-Admiral Cornic.⁶¹² Although much smaller than the aborted invasion of Britain – only 20,000 men were to be involved⁶¹³ – the plan serves as proof that the Channel Islands were viewed by the French as strategically important. Unfortunately, it is an episode which – save for a pair of articles

⁶⁰⁵ E. Desbrière, *Projets et Tentatives de Débarquement aux Iles Britanniques*, 4 Tomes (Paris, 1900) Tome I, p. 48; and N. Hampson, *La Marine de l’An II: Mobilisation de la Flotte de l’Océan 1793-94* (Paris, 1959) p. 85

⁶⁰⁶ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D’Auvergne*, p. 43

⁶⁰⁷ TNA PC 1/4508, ‘Report of an Examination of a Person Recently Arrived at Guernsey from Normandy’, undated, 1813

⁶⁰⁸ Desbrière, *Projets et Tentatives*, p. 29

⁶⁰⁹ Hampson, *La Marine de l’An II*, p. 83

⁶¹⁰ Desbrière, *Projets et Tentatives*, pp. 33 and 36

⁶¹¹ An original French copy of the plans is held in AN AF II, 202, dossier 1687

⁶¹² SJA, L/F/08/H/10, ‘Bouchette to Rossignol re. Proposed Invasion of the Channel Islands’, February 16th 1794

⁶¹³ Hampson, *La Marine de l’An II*, p. 84

published in the *ABSJ* and *TSG* – appears to have attracted but little attention within English historiography,⁶¹⁴ and this lack of coverage obscures the severity with which the threat was treated by the British government. As has been already shown, 2,000 additional troops were committed to the Channel Islands in 1794 alone (see chapter two),⁶¹⁵ and this was largely in response to the perceived heightened risk of invasion.

Although Bisson's article provides a useful summary of the documents pertaining to the planned invasion,⁶¹⁶ critical engagement with the source material is limited. For example, while he states that 'large forces were assembling [in Cherbourg] under a cloak of secrecy', and that by 1794, 'the military preparations were almost complete',⁶¹⁷ he fails to address the viability of the plan from the French perspective. However, the wider evidence nonetheless supports De Saumarez' conclusion that the plan of 1794 had been adopted with serious intent of success; not least a report of December 1793, in which Dundas highlighted an unusually high concentration of French naval forces off the coast of Guernsey.⁶¹⁸ Moreover, January 1794 saw a large number of escort craft sent from Noirmoutier and Cherbourg to St. Malo,⁶¹⁹ and it is likely that these were the craft listed in the abovementioned secret correspondence between Rossignol and Bouchette (see appendix c).⁶²⁰ Most significant of all, intelligence received at the start of February 1794 revealed that a force of four frigates and

⁶¹⁴ See Bisson, 'Plans for the Capture of the Channel Islands', 388-390; and C.H. De Saumarez, 'Lazare Carnot's Plan for the Invasion of the Channel Islands' *TSG* 19:4 (1974) 416-434

⁶¹⁵ *SJA*, L/F/106/A/1, 'Report on French Activity', undated

⁶¹⁶ *SJA*, L/F/08/H/8-12, 'Secret French Documents re. Proposed Invasion of the Channel Islands', 1794

⁶¹⁷ Bisson, 'Plans for the Capture of the Channel Islands', 389

⁶¹⁸ *SJA*, L/F/08/A/16, 'Balcarres to Moira Questioning the Credibility of Monsieur de Solerac, who may have Betrayed the Royalists at the Attack of Granville', December 8th 1793

⁶¹⁹ Hampson, *La Marine de l'An II*, p. 84

⁶²⁰ *SJA*, L/F/08/H/9, 'List of Gunboats Assembled in France for the Proposed Invasion of the Channel Islands', February 17th 1794

at least three smaller vessels was making ready at Cherbourg,⁶²¹ while at Le Havre, all the local fishing boats were being commandeered, and eighty or ninety transports were reported as having assembled in the harbour.⁶²²

French Preparations and Manpower

According to the orders issued by the Committee for Public Safety on January 31st, 1794, the assault on Guernsey – specifically the bombardment of Castle Cornet – was to require the support of four ships-of-the-line, while a fleet of fishing boats would be commandeered to act as landing craft. As for the assault on Jersey, this was to involve two ships-of-the-line, four frigates, two corvettes, two *razées* – tasked with the subjugation of *Mont Orgueil* and Elizabeth Castle – with the invasion force itself being transported on board between twelve and seventeen smaller vessels.⁶²³ Of greater interest is the correspondence which passed between Rossignol and Bouchette, the Minister for War: a collection which – more than any other source – reveals the true extent of the danger which faced the Channel Islands in the spring of 1794. With respect to the personnel involved, not only was the Commander-in-Chief a veteran of the War in the *Vendée*, but Cornic was a naval officer of considerable experience, having served during the Seven Years' War and the American War of Independence.⁶²⁴ Furthermore, several prominent officers were to be seconded to the expedition: Captain Saint-Laurent, a skilled artillery officer and engineer;

⁶²¹ TNA, ADM 1/6032, Intelligence from Cherbourg, February 4th 1794

⁶²² Ibid, Intelligence from Captain Warren at Le Havre, February 5th and 6th 1794

⁶²³ SJA, L/F/08/H/8, 'Copy of an Extract from the Register of the French Republic', January 31st 1794

⁶²⁴ Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict*, pp. 27-71

Generals Moulin, Barazer and Crublier – all described as ‘good Republicans’ – and the fanatical Billaud-Varenne,⁶²⁵ one of the ‘architects’ of the Terror.⁶²⁶

In order to facilitate his assembly of the desired invasion force of 20,000 infantry, 200 to 300 cavalry, and 200 artillerymen, Rossignol had been granted sweeping powers over the maritime districts of north-west France.⁶²⁷ Not only was he able to order the secondment of all the engineers within his sphere of command, but he was permitted to commandeer anything which he considered necessary to ensure success, even men and equipment not under his immediate command’.⁶²⁸ Indeed, while De Saumarez claims that he ‘had little taste for the enterprise and little faith in its success’,⁶²⁹ it appears nonetheless that Rossignol was determined to rectify the inadequacies in the force under his command. For example, upon discovering that he had access to only eight of the twelve howitzers required by the original plan, he requisitioned two 8-pdr guns and two 12-pdr guns to make up the shortfall, claiming that these were ‘of much greater value for the operations’. Similarly, after reporting that many of the troops, ‘even those in battalions detailed for the expedition’, possessed ‘exceedingly defective’ muskets and bayonets, he ordered that replacements be sent from the arsenal at Rennes, also requisitioning ‘all the guns’ stored at Vire, Avranches and Pontorson’ (see map c).⁶³⁰

⁶²⁵ SJA, L/F/08/H/8, ‘Copy of an Extract from the Register of the French Republic’, January 31st 1794

⁶²⁶ SJA, L/F/08/H/10-11, Bouchette to Rossignol, February 16th and 17th 1794; and S. Schama, *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 1989) p. 809

⁶²⁷ SJA, L/F/08/H/8, ‘Copy of an Extract from the Register of the French Republic’, January 31st 1794

⁶²⁸ SJA, L/F/08/H/10-11, Bouchette to Rossignol, February 16th and 17th 1794

⁶²⁹ Saumarez, ‘Lazare Carnot’s Invasion Plan’, 427

⁶³⁰ SJA, L/F/08/H/12, ‘Bouchette to Rossignol re. Proposed Invasion of the Channel Islands’, February 19th and 20th 1794; and ‘Rossignol to the Committee of Public Safety’, February 25th 1794, cited in Desbrière, *Projets et Tentatives*, p. 45

With respect to the troops themselves, the Committee had expressed a desire that these should be drawn from ‘battalions which had served in the French Islands or aboard ship, and that there should be no battalions of conscripts or without experience of fighting’.⁶³¹ However, the requisitioning of units such as the 67th Regt. – including a company of engineers and an ammunition convoy – and the grenadiers of the 82nd Regt., as well as a total of eleven battalions from Brest, Dieppe, Le Havre, Cherbourg and Granville, caused considerable disruption. In particular, Generals Vialle and Thureau – commanding the divisions from which these units were drawn – complained bitterly of the fact that they were only able to replace these men with raw recruits.⁶³² Moreover, while Rossignol argued that the local conscripts were ‘accustomed from youth to a way of life which will make up for their lack of wider experience’,⁶³³ he could not change the fact that ‘courage, dash and fanatical belief’ could never make them good seamen.⁶³⁴ Even in areas where the *Levée en Masse* – intended to raise 350,000 men⁶³⁵ – did not produce widespread disaffection, it proved difficult to find men with maritime combat experience,⁶³⁶ and Rossignol was forced to draw troops from St. Malo, Fougères and Rennes (see map d).⁶³⁷

The Response in the Channel Islands

In spite of these various problems, February 19th saw Rossignol confirm that his force of 20,000 men – with artillery in proportion – was ready to embark,⁶³⁸ and

⁶³¹ SJA, L/F/08/H/10, Bouchette to Rossignol, February 16th 1794

⁶³² Desbrière, *Projets et Tentatives*, pp. 42-43

⁶³³ SJA, L/F/08/H/10, Bouchette to Rossignol, February 16th 1794

⁶³⁴ Saumarez, ‘Lazare Invasion Carnot’s Plan’, 428

⁶³⁵ Broers, ‘The Concept of ‘Total War’, pp. 247 and 252

⁶³⁶ D. Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock: A History of the Anglo-Corsican Kingdom and the Role in Britain’s Mediterranean Strategy during the Revolutionary War, 1793-97* (London, 1895) pp. 143-144

⁶³⁷ Desbrière, *Projets et Tentatives*, p. 43

⁶³⁸ SJA, L/F/08/H/12, Rossignol to Bouchette, February 19th 1794

the sheer size of this force would certainly have posed a significant threat to the security of the Channel Islands. However, French preparations did not go unnoticed: on March 8th, an emergency session of the States of Jersey heard that 10,000 troops were assembled at St. Malo, that warning had been sent to the Channel Squadron, and that ‘every means of preparation, defence and vigilance was to be adopted’.⁶³⁹ Moreover, concerns over a possible French invasion had been raised as early as April 1793, when the captain of the *Hope* spy cutter had succeeded, by means of subterfuge, in obtaining the release of eleven men then being held under embargo at Cherbourg.⁶⁴⁰ According to the independent testimonies of four of the men, Monsieur Paguiel – Adjutant Major of the 4th *Battalion de la Charente* – had let slip of a plan to launch an invasion of Guernsey; a force of 10,000 men and between twelve and fourteen gunboats having been assembled for the purpose.⁶⁴¹ Fortunately for the Channel Islands, the outbreak of disorder in Brittany forced the authorities in Cherbourg to postpone the embarkation,⁶⁴² with one company of artillery and two regiments of volunteers having been ordered to march against the *chouans*.⁶⁴³

As to the 1794 expedition, the fact that his force did not sail for Chausey until late March, one month later than had been originally planned,⁶⁴⁴ proves that this project was fatally undermined by the French government’s failure to take account of the logistical problems faced by Rossignol.⁶⁴⁵ Furthermore, it is clear that many of the French troops became aware of their having lost the

⁶³⁹ SJA, L/F/97/M2/39, De Carteret, *Greffier*, to *The Times*, March 15th 1794

⁶⁴⁰ TNA, HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Dundas, April 23rd 1793

⁶⁴¹ Ibid, ‘Testimonies of Mr. James Gibson of Guernsey, Mr. John Edwards of The Strand, London, and Mr. John Underwood of Cocking, All Having Arrived at Alderney on April 20th 1793’

⁶⁴² Ibid, Le Mesurier to Dundas, April 23rd 1793

⁶⁴³ Ibid, ‘Testimony of Mr. John Edwards’, April 20th 1793

⁶⁴⁴ SJA, L/F/08/H/8, ‘Copy of an Extract from the Register of the French Republic’, January 31st 1794

⁶⁴⁵ SJA, L/F/08/H/12, Rossignol to Bouchette, February 19th 1794

advantage of surprise,⁶⁴⁶ Gabory having noted that at least one battalion of French troops mutinied, the men protesting that ‘the English fleet keep the sea’.⁶⁴⁷ However, while it is certainly true that the authorities in the Channel Islands professed confidence in their ability to repulse any attack from the adjoining coast, there were a number of other reasons for the abandonment of the plan. Most significantly, the difficulty of supplying Brest by land forced the French to devoting all available naval resources to the safeguarding of the expected grain convoys from America (see chapter eight).⁶⁴⁸ In addition, mirroring the events of the previous April, an outbreak of *chouan* activity obliged Rossignol to detach part of his 20,000-strong invasion force to reinforce or replace the garrisons of towns from which men had been sent on counter-insurgency expeditions.⁶⁴⁹

Whatever the reason for its failure, the invasion threat in 1794 was of considerable consequence to the Channel Islands, for it prompted the British government to provide them with the level of naval support for which the inhabitants had for two years petitioned.⁶⁵⁰ In November 1793, Saumarez was stationed in the Guernsey Roads, being ordered both to reconnoitre the French coast and maintain communications between the Channel Islands and MacBride’s fleet.⁶⁵¹ This latter force had been ordered not only to carry out attacks on enemy convoys passing Alderney and Guernsey,⁶⁵² but had been intended to support the landing of a British force in support of a royalist attack

⁶⁴⁶ SJA, L/F/08/A/16, Balcarres to Moira, December 8th 1793

⁶⁴⁷ Gabory, *L’Angleterre et la Vendée*, Vol. I, p. 182

⁶⁴⁸ Hampson, *La Marine de l’An II*, p. 87

⁶⁴⁹ Desbrière, *Projects et Tentatives*, p. 51

⁶⁵⁰ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D’Auvergne*, p. 55

⁶⁵¹ Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence* vol. I, p. 119

⁶⁵² SJA, L/F/08/A/26, ‘Letter from Moira to MacBride Advising that MacBride’s Frigates have a Good Chance of Cutting Off Enemy Convoys’, December 26th 1793

on either Caen or Granville (see chapter nine).⁶⁵³ Further reinforcement of the Channel Islands' naval forces arrived after February 1794, when the States of Jersey succeeded in gaining the support of D'Auvergne in persuading the Admiralty to station a force of light vessels and gun-boats off Gorey.⁶⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the response was once again slow – the squadron was not deployed until September 1794 – and D'Auvergne complained that both the flagship *Nonsuch* (third-rate, 64-guns) and five of the gunboats were reported as being 'very poor sailors'. To resolve this problem, it was necessary to hire three local armed luggers at the rate of 10s per month per ton, and £4.10.0 per month per man,⁶⁵⁵ as well as order three new gunboats and the *Bravo* (sixth-rate, 28 guns) to be sent from Spithead.⁶⁵⁶

However, the most significant result of the invasion scare – whether or not it can be said to have posed any 'real' threat – was the fact that it underlined the ability of the Channel Islands to act as forward outposts, and marked a distinct shift in terms of the French view of the bailiwicks. Whereas past attacks, such as that led by De Rullecourt, had been intended solely to neutralise the Islands' privateering fleet,⁶⁵⁷ both the Expedition of 1794 and subsequent plans show a focus on subjugation and conquest. According to Rossignol's orders, the capture of the Channel Islands was to have resulted in the disarming of the inhabitants, requisitioning of war material, and the imprisonment of military commanders and prominent civilians.⁶⁵⁸ Even after the abandonment of the 1794 invasion, the British continued to suspect that the Channel Islands might

⁶⁵³ SJA, L/F/08/A/28, 'Intelligence Report from Prigent re. Recent Dispatch, Attack on Granville, Movements of Royalist Army', December 30th 1793; and L/F/08/A/29, Moira to MacBride, *Liberty Returned from Jersey, Royalists Believed to be Moving to Caen*, December 30th 1793'

⁶⁵⁴ Nicholas, *Sir George Don*, p. 3

⁶⁵⁵ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, p. 57

⁶⁵⁶ Carey, *The Channel Islands*, p. 126

⁶⁵⁷ Cox, 'Transformation of St. Peter Port', p. 45

⁶⁵⁸ SJA, L/F/08/H/8, 'Copy of an Extract from the Register of the French Republic', January 31st 1794

be exploited by the French as the target for diversionary attacks,⁶⁵⁹ and the records of the Directory indicate that such an assault was planned to coincide with the Expedition to Ireland (1796).⁶⁶⁰ Similarly, reports of significant troop concentrations in St. Malo – estimates ranging from 15,000 to 50,000 men⁶⁶¹ – were often accompanied by speculation that an attack on the Channel Islands would serve as ‘a feint to cover their real project’.⁶⁶²

Fort Regent: The Last Line of Defence

Throughout the Great French War, the principal aim pursued by the authorities in the Channel Islands was to prevent the enemy from establishing a beachhead on any part of the coastline. In 1807 alone, Don drew a total of £2,850 from the British government in order to complete the fortification of the Jersey’s most vulnerable bays, many of which might be infiltrated by a small force transported by flat-bottomed or shallow-draught boats.⁶⁶³ However, as has been already mentioned, the strategic vision implemented in the Channel Islands during the latter half of the Great French War was twofold; not only was it necessary to create a formidable ‘first line’ of defence, but also a ‘citadel’ capable of withstanding a protracted siege.⁶⁶⁴ Once again, this was consistent with the strategy adopted in Britain: between Selsey, Sussex and Cromer, Norfolk, the coast bristled with fifty batteries and redoubts, while forts were constructed at Eastbourne, Dymchurch and Harwich, and it was proposed to construct Martello

⁶⁵⁹ TNA WO 1/602, Dobrée to the Commissioners for Sick and Wounded, July 12th 1794; PC 1/117B, D’Auvergne to Dundas, August 29th 1796; and PC 1/118B, Strachan to D’Auvergne, May 22nd 1798

⁶⁶⁰ AN AF III, 420, Dossier 2355, Directory to the Minister of Marine, December 15th 1796; and AN AF III, 421, Dossier 2358, Directory to the Minister of Marine, December 17th 1796

⁶⁶¹ *The Times*, July 9th 1796, May 5th 1801, August 8th 1803, September 7th 1804 and October 4th 1811

⁶⁶² *The Times*, October 2nd 1811

⁶⁶³ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of January 24th 1807 and A/A1/1, Letters of June 7th, June 27th, July 27th, October 12th and November 16th 1807

⁶⁶⁴ Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 90

Towers at 143 sites between Littlehampton and Great Yarmouth.⁶⁶⁵ However, most important of all were the developments which took place at Dover – with the fortification of the Western Heights and the reinforcement of the Castle – and Chatham, with the construction of Fort Pitt and Fort Clarence.⁶⁶⁶

With respect to the construction of Fort Regent itself, the strategic importance both of the Town Hill and South Hill had long been acknowledged: during the Civil War, for example, Parliamentary troops had constructed a battery on the site for the purpose of bombarding Elizabeth Castle. Similarly, a proposal submitted by the Committee for the Defence of the Island in 1787 had included a plan for a battery or other fortification on the South Hill – primarily as a means to provide Elizabeth Castle with supporting fire⁶⁶⁷ – and it is likely that this is the ‘citadel’ shown on the ‘Bouillon Map’ of 1799 (see map e). However, in spite of the fact that the town of St. Helier had no significant landward protection, plans for the construction of a fortress and various auxiliary buildings on Town Hill – some tabled as early as 1796⁶⁶⁸ – met with resistance from the inhabitants.⁶⁶⁹ In March 1792, the land-owners and inhabitants had determined ‘not to sell or dispose of their property rights on the [Town] Hill, under any pretext or at any price’; a decision reaffirmed in January 1796 by ‘the majority of the Assembly of the *Vingtaine de la Ville*’.⁶⁷⁰ Consequently, although an Act was passed on July 20th 1796 concerning the sale of the Town Hill to the Crown for the sum of £466,

⁶⁶⁵ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, pp. 274-276

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 281

⁶⁶⁷ W. Davies, ‘Early Proposals for Fortifying the Town Hill’, *ABSJ* 83:4 (1984) 511

⁶⁶⁸ *SJA*, L/F/22/E/11, ‘Notification of a Meeting of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* to Discuss the Site of the Proposed Fort on the Town Hill’, July 11th 1796; and L/F/22/E/13, ‘Notification of a Meeting of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* to Discuss the Building of a Troop Hospital on the Town Hill’, September 16th 1796

⁶⁶⁹ *SJA*, L/F/22/E/7, ‘Notification of a Meeting of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* Concerning the Disposition of Vacant Lands’, January 7th 1796

⁶⁷⁰ *SJA*, L/F/22/E/9, ‘Printed Minutes of the Meeting of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* Concerning the Granting of the Town Hill to the Crown’, July 6th 1796

13s 4d, this decision – along with a corresponding Act relating to the South Hill – was not confirmed until May 4th 1803.⁶⁷¹

In terms of providing an explanation for the change of heart which brought about the end of this lengthy impasse, it is reasonable to conclude that many of the proprietors of the town – especially members of the growing mercantile class – were swayed by financial rather than patriotic motives.⁶⁷² While the discussion of the Islanders' attitude to militia service has provided clear evidence of their desire to prove themselves loyal to their sovereign (see chapter two), it is clear that winning support for the fortification programme required a far more pragmatic line of argument. Thus, when Humfrey finally announced that 'the difficulties that arose respecting our obtaining possession of the north part of the Town Hill...are done away'⁶⁷³ – the *Procureurs* having resolved that 'it entirely rests with [the Commander-in-Chief] to accelerate the views of government'⁶⁷⁴ – this by no means represented a successful 'appeal to patriotism'. Indeed, both Humfrey and Gordon issued independent assurances that the surrender of the land would be accompanied by 'a fair and adequate compensation for its value',⁶⁷⁵ and a civil action brought against the latter in August 1804 – reveals that the inhabitants were determined to ensure that this promise was upheld.⁶⁷⁶

⁶⁷¹ *SJA*, L/F/22/E/20, 'Notes of a Meeting of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* Concerning the Decision to grant Town Hill to the Crown', May 4th 1803

⁶⁷² *SJA*, L/F/22/E/39, 'Printed Letter to the Inhabitants of the *Vingtaine de la Ville*', March 6th 1805

⁶⁷³ *TNA* WO 55/808, Humfrey to Gordon, August 22nd 1803

⁶⁷⁴ *Procureurs* of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* to Gordon, August 12th 1803, in *SJA*, L/F/22/E/2, 'Extract from the Minutes of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* re. the Building of Fortifications on the Town Hill', 1781-1803

⁶⁷⁵ *TNA* WO 55/808, Humfrey to Gordon, August 22nd 1803, and Gordon to the *Procureurs* of the *Vingtaine de la Ville*, August 11th 1803, in *SJA*, L/F/22/E/2, 'Extract from the Minutes of the *Vingtaine de la Ville*', 1781-1803

⁶⁷⁶ *SJA*, A/A9/2, 'Correspondence Between the Council Chamber in Whitehall and the Lieutenant-Governor's Office Relating to the Site of Fort Regent', August 28th 1804

More importantly, the inhabitants' acceptance of the sale of the Town Hill was secured by an arrangement for the *Procureurs* to take an active part in the initial stages of the fortification programme, and to meet directly with Humfrey in order to calculate the appropriate compensation for each landowner. Thus, it was agreed that the proprietors would 'at any time be ready to attend [the officer] appointed to mark out the ground',⁶⁷⁷ and that Gordon, for his part, would do 'everything necessary' to ensure that the *Procureurs* remained 'in possession of the knowledge they required'.⁶⁷⁸ The effectiveness of this approach was demonstrated by the passing of an Act of the States in May 1805: it being confirmed that 'the proprietors of the *Vingtaine* are satisfied with the decision of the *voyeurs*', and that the former could make 'no future claim whatever on government'.⁶⁷⁹ As to the concerns expressed with respect to the projected cost of the project, it must be noted that the final sum was comparable to that expended on similar projects undertaken in the south-east of England. While the cost of Fort Regent has been reckoned at between £307,382⁶⁸⁰ and £375,203⁶⁸¹, contemporary estimates for the construction of eighty-eight Martello Towers between Seaford and Eastware Bay proposed a total of £221,000, while it was reckoned that £402,999 had been expended on Dover Castle and the Western Heights.⁶⁸²

Overall, the comparable costs of the construction of Fort Regent and the improvements to Dover Castle reflect the fact that both were intended to serve as the 'citadel' of a vast network of defences; however, Jersey's new fortress

⁶⁷⁷ *Procureurs* to Gordon, August 12th 1803, in *SJA*, L/F/22/E/37, 'Printed Copy of Transactions between the *Vingtaine de la Ville* and the Governor Concerning the Sale of Town Hill', November 1st 1804

⁶⁷⁸ Gordon to Humfrey, November 10th 1803, in *Ibid*

⁶⁷⁹ *TNA*, HO 98/10, Gordon to Hawkesbury, May 20th 1805

⁶⁸⁰ Davies, *Fort Regent*, p. 49

⁶⁸¹ Balleine, *A History of the Island of Jersey*, cited in Coysh, 'Nineteenth Century Defences', 298

⁶⁸² Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon*, p. 281

also compared favourably with its counterparts in terms of armament. By 1815, Dover Castle mounted 231 pieces of artillery,⁶⁸³ while the final armament of Fort Regent included forty-seven 24-pdr guns, twenty-one 18-pdr guns, twenty-six 12-pdr guns, and thirty 24-pdr carronades.⁶⁸⁴ Although the total complement would not be installed until 1815, it was reported in September 1811 that the citadel's guns were sufficiently numerous as to cover both the harbour and town of St. Helier and the heights to the north and west (see map e).⁶⁸⁵ Even in May 1810, it had been possible for over sixty pieces of ordnance to be installed in the partially-completed Fort, including eight 24-pdr guns, eighteen 18-pdr guns, five 'long' and seven 'medium' 12-pdr guns, seventeen 24-pdr carronades, two 13-inch mortars, and four 10-inch mortars.⁶⁸⁶ By contrast, the armament of Fort George at the end of the Great French War consisted of only twenty-four cannon of all calibres, four mortars and a single carronade,⁶⁸⁷ while the armament of Fort Ricasoli in Malta in 1807 comprised of only ten 24-pdr guns, twenty-two 24-pdr carronades and four 13-inch mortars.⁶⁸⁸

The Labour Force

As was stated in the first section of this chapter, the shadow of Don's reputation has obscured a number of other key individuals, without whom the massive fortification programme could not possibly have succeeded. Of these, it is Humfrey – OCRE from 1800 to 1814⁶⁸⁹ – who is perhaps the most important: Davies having described him as 'an extremely capable and conscientious man',

⁶⁸³ Longmate, *Island Fortress*, pp. 212-213

⁶⁸⁴ Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 90

⁶⁸⁵ TNA, PC 1/4508, 'Report Detailing Progress on the Citadel of Fort Regent', September 17th 1811

⁶⁸⁶ SJA, L/F/96/A/1, 'Return of Guns Proposed to be Mounted on Part of the New Fort', March 1810

⁶⁸⁷ Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 211

⁶⁸⁸ Gregory, *Malta*, pp. 272-273

⁶⁸⁹ Platt, *Concise History*, p. 73

and 'a very fine engineer, [who] rose to high rank primarily because of solid and competent perseverance'.⁶⁹⁰ Likewise, Davies has characterised his relationship with Don as 'a lucky encounter that enabled [the latter] to fulfil most of Conway's intentions';⁶⁹¹ Humfrey being given the task of organising the enormous manpower required to complete both the fortifications and the military roads (see chapter four). Just as 1797 had seen nearly 3,000 militiamen employed on the works at Dover,⁶⁹² so the fortifications in the Channel Islands relied heavily on military labour: in 1808, the 2nd/58th and 76th Regts. of Foot contributed 300 men each; while the entirety of the 2nd/57th Regt of Foot was pressed into service.⁶⁹³ Thereafter, it was ordered that at least 600 soldiers and 230 military artificers⁶⁹⁴ should be seconded from the garrison each year,⁶⁹⁵ but even with 'every man off duty, excepting recruits...employed in various working parties', Don considered it necessary to ask for 400-500 additional men.⁶⁹⁶

In the context of this labour shortfall, Humfrey's organisational abilities were ably demonstrated: despite the 2nd/83rd Regt. of Foot having been ordered to Jersey in 1807,⁶⁹⁷ a report of March 1809 revealed that only 1,348 rank-and-file of the garrison's central division were fit for service.⁶⁹⁸ While the employment of so many fit and able troops may appear to have had serious implications for local defence, the risk was lessened by the requisition of 150 military artificers,

⁶⁹⁰ Davies, *Fort Regent*, p. 74

⁶⁹¹ Davies, *Coastal Towers*, p. 47

⁶⁹² Knight, *Britain Against Napoleon*, p. 281

⁶⁹³ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of March 16th 1808

⁶⁹⁴ Formed in 1787, the Corps of Royal Military Artificers consisted exclusively of ncos and privates; individual companies being commanded by members of the Royal Corps of Engineers, which consisted exclusively of commissioned officers. In 1812, the Royal Military Artificers were retitled as the Royal Corps of Sappers and Miners.

⁶⁹⁵ SJA, A/A5/2, Letter of March 4th 1809 and A/A1/2, Letter of February 29th 1812

⁶⁹⁶ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of January 18th 1808

⁶⁹⁷ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of May 9th 1807

⁶⁹⁸ SJA, A/A5/2, Letter of March 4th 1809

200 miners and forty blacksmiths from southern England,⁶⁹⁹ as well as an unknown number of civilian masons, miners and bricklayers from London.⁷⁰⁰ In order to justify such measures, the senior officers in both bailiwicks were able to call upon a precedent which had been established during the early phases of the construction of Fort Regent. First, in order to ensure that the garrison would have access to a secure water supply, it had been necessary to sink a well through the Town Hill to a depth of 235 feet; an undertaking which had required the services of a large number of masons, blacksmiths, miners and labourers from the garrison.⁷⁰¹ Secondly, the departure from Jersey of the 3rd/1st and 2nd/3rd Regts. of Foot in 1807 had led Don to complain of having been 'thrown into great embarrassment from the want of masons and blacksmiths', and obliged to requisition replacements from Guernsey.⁷⁰²

Lines of Communication – The Island Telegraph

Although it is clear that the abovementioned fortifications would have presented a formidable obstacle to any projected invasion, it must be remembered that their true potential could be realised only if the troops garrisoned therein were able to coordinate their operations. Moreover, while vessels stationed at Guernsey, Alderney or Sark were ideally placed to raise the alarm, it was still estimated that between twelve and twenty-four hours would elapse before the news of an attack of the Channel Islands reached Spithead, Portland or Plymouth.⁷⁰³ Consequently, while initial support for the creation of the inter-insular signal system – both from the Committee for the Defence of the Island

⁶⁹⁹ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of March 4th 1808

⁷⁰⁰ SJA, A/A1/3, Letter of December 24th 1810

⁷⁰¹ Gibb, Myers, and Corbet (eds.), *Fort Regent*, p. 24

⁷⁰² SJA, L/F/95/A/21, 'Letter from Don Asking for Masons and Blacksmiths', August 29th 1807

⁷⁰³ TNA, HO 98/3, Conway to Anon, March 1793

and the Admiralty – had focused on the need to protect the Islands’ merchant fleet,⁷⁰⁴ it was later recalled that the system’s military value had been quickly recognised.⁷⁰⁵ As early as July 1794, Waugh – then Deputy-Governor of Alderney – declared that a ‘fixed’ code of signals would be ‘of infinite use to the King’s Service’,⁷⁰⁶ while in January 1796, Gordon and Small approached the Admiralty with a proposition for the construction of three ‘relay stations’, one each to be sited on Jersey, Guernsey and Sark.⁷⁰⁷ At the same time, Small advised D’Auvergne that he had ‘instantly and without hesitation adopted [the] general Code of Signals for our mutual guidance and security’, and gave his full support to ‘a general telegraphical communication’ between the bailiwicks.⁷⁰⁸

In selecting the most suitable position for each of the signal stations, the authorities in the Channel Islands made judicious use of available high ground: the Jersey posts, for example, included Mont de la Ville in the south; Mont Orgueil in the east; Grosnez in the west; and Rozel in the north.⁷⁰⁹ However, the first ‘generation’ of inter-island signal stations were little more than an *ad hoc* measure, the guards at each station being provided with only a single signal beacon and a light 6-pdr with two blank cartridges as a means by which to raise the alarm.⁷¹⁰ Furthermore, though sited close to the Conway Towers and guardhouses, the first-generation stations were not provided with any supporting batteries, breastworks or other integrated defences. Instead, it was assumed that the report of the gun or the lighting of the beacon would be picked up by the other posts, initiating either an Island-wide mobilisation of the militia or

⁷⁰⁴ *SJL*, LSF J385.5, Bib. Ref: 326759, ‘Act of the States of Jersey, January 18th 1798’

⁷⁰⁵ *TNA*, ADM 1/228, Don to Admiral Brown, December 28th 1812

⁷⁰⁶ *TNA*, WO 1/602, Waugh to Small, July 10th 1794

⁷⁰⁷ *TNA*, ADM 1/221, Letter of January 14th 1796

⁷⁰⁸ *TNA*, WO 1/604, ‘Copy of a Letter from Small to D’Auvergne’, January 21st 1796

⁷⁰⁹ J. Stead, *A Picture of Jersey, or a Stranger’s Companion Through that Island*, (Jersey, 1809) p. 74

⁷¹⁰ *SJA*, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to Colonel Pipon’, August 30th 1801

the summoning of naval assistance from Guernsey.⁷¹¹ Finally, in addition to the simplicity of their communications equipment, the temporary nature of these early signal stations was to be the direct cause of a major defensive weakness following the collapse of the Peace of Amiens. In spite of their construction having been justified by reference to the concerns of the local mercantile community,⁷¹² the entire series of signal posts was dismantled in 1802, their contents being sold off to raise funds 'for the public good' and the stations rented out to private tenants.⁷¹³

The Island Signal Stations – The Permanent System

As a result of the abovementioned steps, the collapse of the Peace of Amiens left the Channel Islands highly vulnerable to a surprise attack: indeed, over a month was to elapse before the system was rendered fully operational.⁷¹⁴ Even in 1804, several of the signal posts remained unfit for purpose,⁷¹⁵ the men 'having no shelter...and being obliged to [remain] exposed to the ravages of the weather',⁷¹⁶ and later accounts show that the correction of this problem would have required significant funds. In 1809, for example, repairs to the signal post at Fort Saumarez were recorded as having amounted to £145 5s 1d, while the cost of building a new signal station at Jerbourg – including 'a new house for the use of the officer' – was estimated at £271 15s 4d.⁷¹⁷ Given that intelligence reports passed almost daily between Jersey, Guernsey and Alderney, and between the Channel Islands and the vessels of the Royal Navy (see chapter

⁷¹¹ Ibid, Le Couteur to Colonel [Illegible]', January 5th 1801

⁷¹² Kavanagh, 'Signal Stations' p. 137

⁷¹³ *SJL*, LSF J385.5 Bib. Ref: 326759, Entries for May 1st 1802 and October 23rd 1802

⁷¹⁴ Ibid, Entries for May 16th 1803 and June 11th 1803

⁷¹⁵ Ibid, Entry for May 19th 1804

⁷¹⁶ Ibid, Entry for December 5th 1804

⁷¹⁷ *TNA*, PC 1/4505, 'Estimate of Repairs and Improvements required at the Signal House near Fort Saumarez' and 'Estimate of Repairs in Building a New Signal Station at Jerbourg Point', April 18th 1809

eight),⁷¹⁸ it seems strange that Gordon did not attempt to establish permanent signal stations in the first instance. Not only would such a system have been invaluable in peacetime, but precedent had been set in Great Britain through the actions of the Admiralty. At a time when the Channel Islands still relied on flag signals for inter-insular communication,⁷¹⁹ the first telegraphic semaphore had been established between Deal and London, and soon after, the system had been extended to cover vast swathes of southern England.⁷²⁰

However, even if Gordon's prefabricated alarm posts seem primitive by comparison, the early network of alarm posts provided a crucial framework for later developments.⁷²¹ In order for improvements to be made to the 'first generation' system, extensive trials were conducted, the 'traditional' methods of alarm guns and beacons being combined with semaphore telegraph and flag codes. As a result of incorporating these various techniques, it was argued that complex messages could be communicated efficiently at any time or tide,⁷²² and the trials drew praise both from Don and Captain Dumaresq, a naval officer assisting on the project.⁷²³ Even so, while it enabled much faster transmission of information,⁷²⁴ the new telegraph still could not operate efficiently in fog, heavy rain or high winds;⁷²⁵ in addition, the construction of new coastal batteries in March 1809 necessitated the relocation of at least one of the Jersey signal

⁷¹⁸ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to D'Auvergne, November 21st 1799, Le Couteur to the Commander of the Wallace Fencibles, Guernsey, December 8th 1799

⁷¹⁹ TNA, ADM 1/221, Letter of January 14th 1796

⁷²⁰ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 137; C.N. Parkinson, *Britannia Rules: The Classic Age of Naval History, 1793-1815* (London, 1977) p. 10

⁷²¹ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of August 17th 1807 and A/A1/5, Letter of September 20th 1811

⁷²² SJA, L/F/95/A/6, 'Observations Made from Sark on the Testing of Danger Signals at Jersey and Guernsey, Firing of Guns to Test if Danger Signals Could be Seen Between the Islands', August 14th 1806'

⁷²³ SJA, L/F/95/A/9, 'Correspondence Between Don and Dumaresq Concerning the Success of the Signals Trials between Jersey, Guernsey and Sark', August 15th 1806; and A/A1/2, Letter of August 16th 1806

⁷²⁴ SJA, L/F/95/A/24, 'Don to Doyle Concerning Plans for Telegraphic Signals', November 15th 1807

⁷²⁵ SJA, L/F/95/A/6, 'Observations Made from Sark', August 14th 1806 and L/F/106/A/1, Don to Anon, November 10th 1807

posts.⁷²⁶ As a result of such deficiencies, it was often the case that Don was left with 'no intelligence whatever [from] Cherbourg or any of the opposite ports', meaning that the local packets and scouts remained a valuable asset within the context of local security.⁷²⁷ For example, the *schuyt Rose* was ordered to maintain 'a constant guard during the night or foggy weather [and] keep a boat in readiness to follow any craft which may refuse to bring to', her commander being authorised to seize and detain such vessels on suspicion of 'belonging to or being in the employ of the enemy'.⁷²⁸

In closing this brief discussion of the signal stations, it would be wise to draw attention to the fact that their very existence highlights the continued strategic importance of the Channel Islands. As late as October 1811, news reached Jersey concerning the reinforcement of Cherbourg and a 'more than usual vigilance along the opposite coast',⁷²⁹ but the local authorities had long appreciated the value of the local telegraph as a means of providing advanced warning of an expedition. In 1808, it was estimated that news of a French breakout might be communicated to Saumarez' squadron in as little as thirty minutes,⁷³⁰ and that the completion of the Sark relay station might allow communication between Jersey and Guernsey to be conducted in as little as fifteen minutes.⁷³¹ Similarly, the signal stations were so equipped as to permit the sending of messages both in the local code and the 'official' Admiralty code, enabling communication with both merchant and Royal Navy vessels,⁷³² while a local pilot was appointed for the purpose of providing twice-daily reports of local

⁷²⁶ TNA, ADM 1/224, D'Auvergne to Pole, March 3rd 1809

⁷²⁷ SJA, A/A1/6, Letter of August 9th 1810

⁷²⁸ SJA, A/A1/1, 'Instructions to the Commander of the Armed Schuyt *Rose*', July 13th 1808

⁷²⁹ SJA, L/F/95/B/8, Don to 'My Dear Sir', September 29th 1811

⁷³⁰ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of August 21st 1808

⁷³¹ SJA, L/F/95/A/35, Don to Doyle, July 2nd 1808

⁷³² SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of August 11th 1807

sea and weather conditions.⁷³³ Finally, it should be noted that the signal stations helped to supplement the intelligence picture received from agents operating 'in every port from L'Orient to the Texel'⁷³⁴ (see chapter eight), especially when poor weather conditions disrupted local maritime traffic.⁷³⁵

'The Gibraltar of the Channel'?

In his report of 1793, Craig had given voice to the high level of optimism which already existed amongst the local military authorities with respect to the security of the Channel Islands. Referring to the Conway Towers, he predicted that these fortifications would prove invulnerable to assault by infantry, artillery bombardment or undermining, and that 'a dozen resolute fellows, properly armed and supplied' might hold each fort against 'ten thousand of the enemy'.⁷³⁶ Certainly, the capture of the *Torra di Mortella* in 1794 provided a clear precedent for this prediction: the tower – used as a template for the British 'Martellos' – was captured only after two days' heavy fighting, and resisted a bombardment by two frigates.⁷³⁷ However, while the fortifications constructed during the 1790s were doubtless formidable, both Don and Doyle shared the view that too much faith had been placed in the ability of the bailiwicks' 'natural defences' to disrupt an enemy landing, as well as the speed with which a relief force might be sent from Britain.⁷³⁸ Based on the evidence presented above, it is clear that the transformation of the Channel Islands into the 'Gibraltar of the

⁷³³ SJA, A/A1/2, Letters of January 2nd and January 12th 1807

⁷³⁴ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 289

⁷³⁵ SJA, L/F/95/B/8, Don to 'My Dear Sir', September 29th 1811

⁷³⁶ TNA, HO 98/3, Craig, 'Memoir on the Defence of the Island of Jersey', March 1793

⁷³⁷ Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 28

⁷³⁸ TNA, HO 98/27, Doyle to Pelham, February 17th 1803

Channel' envisaged by Don and Doyle was only fully achieved during the latter half of the Great French War.

Indeed, while it is certainly true that the defences constructed prior to 1793 provided a measure of protection in the event of an attack, it was only once they were provided with supporting batteries that it became possible for the defenders to bring to bear overwhelming mutually-supportive fire. Likewise, although the coastal defences may have been able to disrupt an enemy landing and delay his advance,⁷³⁹ only the construction of Fort Regent and Fort George allowed the garrisons the option of retreating before overwhelming numbers and making preparations for the arrival of reinforcements from Britain.⁷⁴⁰ In addition, the conversion of the local signal posts to the telegraphic system was vital for ensuring the efficient coordination of defensive operations; according to Don's estimate, he was now able to obtain 'in ten minutes' such information as would take a despatch rider 'several hours' to communicate.⁷⁴¹ However, as sophisticated as the complementary forms of 'active' and 'passive' defence may have been, an ultimate appreciation of their effectiveness cannot be gained without also taking due consideration of the manner in which the construction of the military roads enabled troops and fortifications to act in concert.

⁷³⁹ Warren to Spencer, August 7th 1796, Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. I, pp. 272-274; and TNA, WO 1/604, Dalrymple to Dundas, April 20th 1797

⁷⁴⁰ TNA, HO 98/24, Col. Thomas Dundas to Sir David Dundas, February 1st 1793; WO 55/808, Humfrey to Gordon, May 22nd 1803; and SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of August 7th 1806

⁷⁴¹ SJA, A/A1/1, September 1st 1807

Chapter Four – The Military Roads: ‘The Mark of a Civilised Nation’

While the efforts made to improve the combat effectiveness of the garrison and militia (see chapter two) prove that the security of the Channel Islands was not entrusted to bricks and mortar alone, the troops’ true potential could be realised only if they were able to deploy efficiently against an enemy. For example, in drawing up a plan for the opposition of an enemy landing in St. Ouen’s Bay, Gordon argued that they should be met in the first instance by ‘advanced corps of 3,800 infantry, 1,000 cavalry and 200 artillerymen, with twenty-two pieces of ordnance’.⁷⁴² However, he gave no explanation as to how such a large body of troops was to be either assembled promptly or marched with haste through the maze of country lanes which, prior to the opening of the military roads, provided the only means of crossing the interior of the island.⁷⁴³ A similar problem also prevailed at Alderney, since although the militiamen were described as ‘particularly expert in the management of the guns’, and able to ‘fire red-hot shot as coolly as any regulars from Woolwich’, it was acknowledged that they must ‘remain dispersed all over the Island’.⁷⁴⁴ As a result, it can be seen that the improvements made to the coastal defences during the 1790s – while a significant contribution to the security of the Islands – had the unfortunate effect of obscuring the need to make better provisions for the movement of troops.

⁷⁴² *SJA*, L/F/97/M5/1, ‘Suggestions Relating to Positions and Modes of Attack Against an Invading Army, Includes a Plan of Positions’, April 30th 1803

⁷⁴³ *SJA*, A/A1/2, Letter of December 25th 1806

⁷⁴⁴ *TNA*, HO 98/42, ‘Thoughts on the Present Defence of the Island of Alderney as Directed by Brig-Gen. Este’, August 17th 1801

The Situation Prior to the Arrival of Don and Doyle

In general, it appears that the state of the Channel Islands' roads at the beginning of the nineteenth century mirrored the situation which had prevailed in Scotland prior to 1724, and the commencement of the road-building scheme pioneered by Wade and Caulfield.⁷⁴⁵ Excluding the numerous farm tracks and footpaths which criss-crossed the hinterland of the country parishes, the existing road system was based around three types of highway, known in the local *patois* as the *chemins du roy* (King's Roads) *chemins de huit pieds* and *chemins de quatre pieds*.⁷⁴⁶ Although these were all accessible to carts and wagons, and each had at least one footpath in order to accommodate pedestrians,⁷⁴⁷ they were nonetheless considered unsuitable for military use. With the exception of the *chemins du roy*, the roads were insufficiently broad to permit the passage of more than a single cart at one time, *gensages* (lay-bys) being provided at regular intervals to admit over-taking and passing by carts and wagons.⁷⁴⁸ However, as Don was quick to observe, even the *chemins du roy* were of insufficient quality to admit the passage of field artillery, and a column of men would find it almost impossible to alter their line-of-march in response to the changing dispositions of the enemy.⁷⁴⁹

Consequently, while it is true that the post-War period saw Don and Doyle romanticised in the local press (see chapter one), the celebration of their achievements by no means overstated the crisis which had existed on their

⁷⁴⁵ W. Taylor, *The Military Roads in Scotland* (Exeter, 1976) p. 32

⁷⁴⁶ These were, respectively, twelve, eight, and four feet wide.

⁷⁴⁷ G.S. Syvret, *Chroniques des Îles de Jersey, Guernesey, Auregny, et Serk* (Jersey, 1858)

⁷⁴⁸ Tupper, *History of Guernsey*, p. 407

⁷⁴⁹ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of December 25th 1806; and L/F/95/B/1, 'Don to Doyle Concerning the Appointment of Mr Mulgrave to the Signal Station at Fort George and Intelligence Relating to French Troops', August 25th 1810

arrival in the respective bailiwicks.⁷⁵⁰ During a speech to the landowners of St. Peter Port, Doyle suggested that Guernsey's roads were in so poor a condition that the island was being allowed to 'languish some two hundred years behind the rest of civilised Europe'.⁷⁵¹ Although D'Auvergne had described the majority of roads in contemporary Normandy and Brittany as 'deep and much cut up...heavy and wet', the French had already begun to develop a network of *chemins ferré* (paved highways) in these regions.⁷⁵² This reflects the significant technological gap which existed between the Channel Islands and their neighbours; Britain and France reaping the benefits of the revolutionary road-building techniques pioneered by engineers such as Trésaguet⁷⁵³ and Telford.⁷⁵⁴ Indeed, while the military roads constructed under Don and Doyle drew upon these new methods – particularly in terms of improved drainage – these 'modern' techniques would not become standard with respect to local road-building until the advent of Macadamisation in the 1820s.⁷⁵⁵

In addition to being too narrow to permit the prompt redeployment of troops, the Channel Islands' roads also suffered from exceedingly poor drainage: flanked by steep banks and ditches and lacking any proper paving, they were often rendered impassable by heavy rain, snow or ice.⁷⁵⁶ Even in the urban centres of St. Helier, St. Aubin and St. Peter Port, the situation was little better: the cobbled streets were more durable in construction, but the small channel set into the centre of the roadway as a conduit for rainwater, seawater and refuse often became obstructed by debris. Not only did this provide a natural breeding-

⁷⁵⁰ Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, p. 189; and Fay, *Channel Islands and Newfoundland*, p. 15

⁷⁵¹ 'Speech of Major-General Doyle', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 15

⁷⁵² TNA, WO 1/923/1, 'Notes Taken by D'Auvergne when Travelling in that Country during 1785-91'

⁷⁵³ Born 1716, Died 1796

⁷⁵⁴ Born 1754, Died 1834

⁷⁵⁵ Crossan, 'Guernsey 1814-1914', pp. 21-22

⁷⁵⁶ TNA, HO 69/10, West to D'Auvergne, January 1796; Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, p. 189; and Platt, *Concise History*, p. 74

ground for disease, but it meant that the urban roads, like those in the rural parishes, were highly susceptible to flooding; according to Johnson, the roads of St. Peter Port were 'appalling, narrow and tortuous', as well as extremely steep, and impassable in stormy weather.⁷⁵⁷ However, the inhabitants of the Channel Islands remained resistant to the improvement of the road network: in particular, it appears to have been widely assumed that the poor state of the roads would serve as a means of securing St. Helier and St Peter Port against attack. In spite of the detailed arguments presented by the Lieutenant-Governors, a group of self-appointed 'experts' argued that an invading force would simply get lost in the country lanes, their artillery and baggage being unable to advance inland.⁷⁵⁸

In order to discredit such misguided arguments, Doyle was able to refer to the writings of theorists such as De Saxe, whose *Art of War*,⁷⁵⁹ and also highlight the extensive road-building programmes already undertaken by the French and British governments.⁷⁶⁰ Consequently, he resolved to go on the offensive: in a public speech to the leading inhabitants of St. Peter Port, the Lieutenant-Governor denounced the 'worthy gentlemen who so kindly favour us with their lectures on tactics, [yet fail to] take the whole of the plan into consideration'.⁷⁶¹ However, not only did they appear ignorant of the need to 'place the roads in the best possible state to permit their brave and ardent defenders to move with the greater celerity to defend their shores', but Doyle also observed that these 'worthy gentlemen' had engaged in a deliberate campaign of misinformation. Despite the extensive reform of the Channel Islands' military forces and coastal

⁷⁵⁷ P. Johnson, *A Short History of Guernsey* 4th Edition, (Guernsey, 1994) pp. 45-46

⁷⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 52

⁷⁵⁹ M. De Saxe, *Art of War: Reveries and Memoirs* (London, 1811) pp. 68-73

⁷⁶⁰ J. Black, *European Warfare, 1660-1815* (London, 1994) pp. 155-156

⁷⁶¹ 'Speech of Major-General Doyle', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 18-19

fortifications (see chapters two and three) members of the Island's elite were alleged to have encouraged rumours that the new military roads would provide the enemy with easy access to the interior. Moreover, Doyle publically mocked his critics' attempts to engender a 'moral panic', it having been put about that the construction of 'good roads' capable of carrying heavy carriages would expose the inhabitants of the rural parishes to 'luxury and extravagance'.⁷⁶²

As this chapter will demonstrate, Doyle and Don were justified in heaping scorn upon those who criticised their desire to implement the British government's policy with respect to the military roads. First and foremost, Conway's initial plans for local defence (see chapter three) had been much influenced by De Saxe's theories,⁷⁶³ and it would seem that the criticisms voiced by members of the local elite arose – like protests in Britain against the Militia Act (see chapter five) – as a result of a misunderstanding of these principles. For example, while he had warned that an army on the march might well be disrupted by bad roads, and rendered vulnerable to ambush,⁷⁶⁴ De Saxe had at no point argued that such a state of affairs should be relied upon as a means of defence. As Doyle observed, should an overwhelming enemy oblige the local troops to retreat, it was likely that the latter would become 'entangled in the very trap proposed for the enemy'.⁷⁶⁵ Similarly, while it was true that a single broken-down cart might stop a column of troops 'for many hours',⁷⁶⁶ it must be remembered that the majority of the local inhabitants were often ill-acquainted with the roads outside their own parishes.⁷⁶⁷ Consequently, they would have been just as liable to get

⁷⁶² Ibid, pp. 13-15

⁷⁶³ Davies, *Coastal Towers*, p. 47

⁷⁶⁴ De Saxe, *Art of War*, p. 43

⁷⁶⁵ 'Speech of Major-General Doyle', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 19

⁷⁶⁶ W. Berry, *The History of the Island of Guernsey* (London, 1815) p. 217

⁷⁶⁷ Davies, *Coastal Towers*, p. 48

lost or bogged down in the country lanes, surrendering the advantage to the enemy troops, many of who would have experienced such conditions during operations against the Vendéans and *Chouans* (see chapter nine).⁷⁶⁸

Again, a comparison between the Channel Islands and the island bases of the Mediterranean serve to demonstrate the erroneous nature of the criticisms put forward by the local elite. Just as the *chemins* of Jersey and Guernsey were rendered impassable to cavalry or artillery in wet weather, so the roads in Malta were often found to be so dusty in dry weather that it was almost impossible to ride or even walk on them without choking.⁷⁶⁹ Similarly, although the eighteenth century had witnessed the construction of several military roads in Sicily, these, in common with the Channel Islands' *chemins de roi*, were too few in number to be of significant benefit. Moreover, Gregory has estimated that the condition of the former had deteriorated to such an extent that it cost more to transport goods to Palermo from the interior of Sicily than it did to send them on to markets in Paris or London.⁷⁷⁰ As for Corsica, the construction programme which had been implemented following the French occupation served as a clear illustration of the benefits of good-quality roads, both with respect to local defence and the enforcement of public order (see chapter five). Following the construction of the military roads, significant progress had been made in the suppression of Corsican banditry,⁷⁷¹ and although the Channel Islands did not experience this problem on the same scale, the *chemins* were acknowledged nonetheless as a haven for criminals.⁷⁷²

⁷⁶⁸ Black, *European Warfare*, p. 183

⁷⁶⁹ Gregory, *Malta*, pp. 28-29

⁷⁷⁰ Gregory, *Sicily*, p. 38

⁷⁷¹ Gregory, *Corsica*, pp. 22-23, 34

⁷⁷² TNA, WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, Undated; HO 99/3, Portland to Dalrymple, September 17th 1801; and Le Cras, *Laws, Customs and Privileges*, p. 371

The Causes of Stagnation – Legal Structures

In addition to the abovementioned resistance to the construction of the military roads, earlier neglect of this aspect of the defence of the Channel Islands arose from the lack of legislative support in either bailiwick, and a consequent reliance upon 'ancient' customs. Despite reforms to Jersey's penal code (see chapter one), no attempt was made before the Great French War to modernise the laws governing highway maintenance; instead, each Midsummer's Day saw the performance of the *Branchage*, a ceremony which had been carried out in the island since the medieval period.⁷⁷³ Each of the *Connétables*, in company with his junior officers, would rendezvous in turn with the Bailiff, Viscount – the Executive Officer of the Royal Court – and three or more Jurats; they would then process through the *chemins* of the parish, with fines being issued against any landowner whose trees or hedges had overgrown the path. In addition, should any of the *chemins* themselves be found to be in an unacceptable state of repair, the costs of putting them right would be met through the levying of fines against the parish assembly.⁷⁷⁴ However, due to the fertility of Jersey's soil, the actual effect of the *Branchage* was minimal: so rapidly did vegetation grow during the late summer that by the eighteenth century, it had become necessary to conduct a second *Branchage* in the autumn.⁷⁷⁵

As for Guernsey, highway maintenance in that island was enforced by means of the *Chevauchée de se Majesté*: essentially a secular version of the inspection which had, in the medieval period, formed part of the preparations for the

⁷⁷³ H. Miles and P. Raynor, *Reintegrative Justice in Practice: The Informal Management of Crime in an Island Community* (Farnham, 2014) pp. 20-22

⁷⁷⁴ Ragg, *A Popular History of Jersey*, p. 112

⁷⁷⁵ F. Le Sueur, *A Natural History of Jersey* (London, 1976) p. 35

Eucharistic Procession on the feast of *Corpus Christi*. Although the Reformation had stripped away the religious context of the practice, its basic purpose remained the same; to enable heavy fines and other punishments to be levied against any landowner who had permitted the public roads to fall into disrepair.⁷⁷⁶ However, a number of crucial differences existed between the *Chevauchée* and the *Branchage*: not only was the former conducted on a triennial rather than annual basis, but instead of surveying all the roads in the island, the *Chevauchée* inspected only the *chemins du roi*.⁷⁷⁷ Consequently, not only does there seem to have been no other form of ‘official’ highway maintenance in Guernsey, but the *Chevauchée* was rendered yet more problematic by the fact that its coverage embraced only a very small number of the Island’s roads on each occasion. Moreover, it appears that the *Chevauchée* had long been observed with little seriousness in the rural parishes: even by the eighteenth century, it was treated as little more than a public holiday, occasioning disorder and raucous behaviour.⁷⁷⁸

In spite of the difficulties caused by this lack of effective legislative machinery, Don and Doyle were by no means the first commanders-in-chief to expend any energy in trying to improve the state of the local roads. Indeed, Gordon’s records reveal that at least some attempt had been made during the final decade of the eighteenth century to compensate for the lack of any ‘official’ road maintenance. Recognising the inadequacy of the *Branchage*, the Lieutenant-Governor had enlisted the help of the *Connétables* in ensuring that more

⁷⁷⁶ J. Jacob, *Annals of the British Norman Isles Constituting the Bailiwick of Guernsey, as Collected from Private Manuscripts, Public Documents and Former Historians, Part 1* (Paris, 1830) p. 335-6; and D.M. Ogier, *Reformation and Society in Guernsey*, (Woodbridge, 1997) p. 36

⁷⁷⁷ E.W. Sharp, ‘La Chevauchée de se Majesté’, in Anon, *The Channel Islands Anthology* No. 2 (Guernsey, 1975) pp. 18-22

⁷⁷⁸ Jacob, *Annals*, p. 336

regular, albeit *ad hoc*, inspections were carried out in the rural parishes. The importance of this simple measure was seen as early as May 1803, when it was discovered ‘a great number of trees in many parts of the Island’ were obstructing the roads, and ‘causing a nuisance by stopping the passage of artillery’.⁷⁷⁹ Likewise, Gordon was quick to recognise that the country lanes were ‘totally unsuitable for the rapid movement of troops’,⁷⁸⁰ and although he may not have suggested the construction of proper military roads, he nonetheless attempted to compensate for this weakness. Not only did he prioritise the maintenance of the *chemins de roi* that connected Grouville, St. Helier and St. Clement,⁷⁸¹ but he also extended the authority of the *Connétables* over the parochial road committees,⁷⁸² then a subdivision of the *Police Honorifique* (see chapter five).

As for measures enacted in the aftermath of the construction of the military communications, the most important addition to the local legislative framework took place in April 1812, when Don presented the a complaint to the States of Jersey respecting the island’s ‘Code of Road Laws’. According to the Lieutenant-Governor, the existing legislation was ‘extremely defective in several essential points’, and he announced that a special Committee would be appointed for the purpose of drawing up a revised version.⁷⁸³ The coverage of the new Code was extensive, but the most important innovation was the strengthening of the laws relating to the *Branchage*, in that the minimum fine for

⁷⁷⁹ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, ‘Circular from Le Couteur to the *Connétables*’, May 25th 1803

⁷⁸⁰ Lempriere, *History*, p. 130

⁷⁸¹ SJA, L/F/22/E/16, ‘Summons to the *Propriétaires* of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* to Meet to Discuss the Proposition that a Public Road be Built from St Helier to St Clement’, 1798

⁷⁸² SJA, L/F/22/K/1, ‘Speech of Francois Le Couteur, Rector of Grouville on the Report of the Roads Committee’, March 1st 1799; and F/D/D4/1, ‘Acts of the Roads Committee of the Roads Committee of St. Helier’, April 17th 1801 to April 5th 1804

⁷⁸³ SJA, A/A1/6, Letter of April 11th 1812

any infraction being set at 1s 6d, with no statutory upper limit.⁷⁸⁴ However, it should also be noted that the officer of *Voyer* (Road Inspector) now became a compulsory position, and any man who refused to comply with an order to render service could be fined by the *Connétable*.⁷⁸⁵ Finally, although no explicit mention is made in the first edition of the new Code, Le Cras states that it had become standard practice by the 1830s for a portion of all fines to be given over to the Committees,⁷⁸⁶ and it is possible that such measures had been introduced by Don as a means of funding road maintenance.

The Causes of Stagnation – Social Factors

Although the promotion of the military road scheme had been recognised by Doyle as one of his most important tasks, opposition from the inhabitants made it impossible for him to make any progress, and as late as 1809, the condition of the local roads remained untenable.⁷⁸⁷ However, while the States of Guernsey was eventually forced to admit that a lack of adequate legislation had allowed the condition of the roads to deteriorate for almost a century,⁷⁸⁸ it is possible that a number of social factors had also encouraged a lack of development. First and foremost, the social and economic situation in the Channel Islands at the end of the eighteenth century meant that the majority of the inhabitants – in common with their counterparts in Sicily and Malta⁷⁸⁹ – simply saw no reason to improve the roads.⁷⁹⁰ At the close of the eighteenth century, the economy of the Channel Islands was almost exclusively agrarian, with a smattering of cottage

⁷⁸⁴ Le Cras, *Laws, Customs and Privileges*, p. 183

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 201-202

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 164

⁷⁸⁷ TNA. WO 1/605, 'Report from Doyle to Unknown', February 6th 1809

⁷⁸⁸ 'Report of the Guernsey Roads Committee, June 6th 1810', reproduced in Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, pp. 177-178

⁷⁸⁹ Gregory, *Sicily*, p. 38; Gregory, *Malta*, pp. 27-28

⁷⁹⁰ Johnson, *A Short History of Guernsey*, p. 45

industries such as textiles, brewing and cooping; consequently, the vast majority of the native inhabitants remained tied to the land, with many living out their entire lives within the parish bounds.⁷⁹¹ Such isolationism was reflected in the inhabitants' respective reasons for opposing the military roads (see below), with the rural islanders focusing on the destruction of their property, and their urban counterparts placing far more emphasis on the likely cost.⁷⁹²

Even with the emergence of the Channel Islands as entrepôts for trade with North America, the Mediterranean and the Baltic, there was little in the way of internal traffic,⁷⁹³ and with so little contact between the rural and urban islanders, suspicion and distrust were inevitable. Aside from their political disagreements (see chapter one), the inhabitants of St. Peter Port, St. Helier and St. Aubin looked upon the rural parishes as being dangerous and wild, rarely, if ever, venturing into the countryside.⁷⁹⁴ Conversely, the labouring classes in the country parishes regarded the emerging urban bourgeois and merchants as both failing to 'pay their way' in terms of taxation and actively conspiring with the rural elites to manipulate local market prices.⁷⁹⁵ Again, this situation paralleled that which existed in the Mediterranean: in Malta, the urban population regarded their rural compatriots as being 'little better than savages', while in Sicily, the inhabitants of the capital were often dismissed by their compatriots as 'wretched and corrupt'.⁷⁹⁶ However, the tensions in the Channel Islands were exacerbated by the significant rural-urban migration which had dominated the second half of the eighteenth century; between 1727 and 1800,

⁷⁹¹ Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, p. 250

⁷⁹² 'Speech of Major-General Doyle', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 20

⁷⁹³ Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port', Abstract

⁷⁹⁴ Johnson, *A Short History of Guernsey*, p. 46

⁷⁹⁵ R. McLoughlin, *The Sea was their Fortune: A Maritime History of the Channel Islands* (Bradford-on-Avon, 1997) p. 97

⁷⁹⁶ Gregory, *Malta*, p. 29, *Sicily*, p. 37

the population of St. Peter Port increased by 152.9%, while that of Guernsey as a whole increased by only 82.1%.⁷⁹⁷

Aside from the intransigent attitude fostered by intense parochialism, it is also evident that the inhabitants of the rural parishes regarded the improvement of the Islands' road system as a potential threat to traditional local life. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, Doyle came under criticism from moralists who suspected that modern roads would tempt the populace into extravagant habits.⁷⁹⁸ While such fears may seem ridiculous or trite, it is clear from Doyle's own records that they were taken extremely seriously by a small but vocal section of Guernsey's rural elite. In seeking to counter the moralist argument, the Commander-in-Chief expressed his understanding that such fears were linked implicitly to the belief that good quality roads would lead to a greater instance of highway robbery and other forms of violent crime.⁷⁹⁹ Certainly, such crimes were far from unknown in the Islands,⁸⁰⁰ but the idea that better-quality roads would exacerbate the problem could be readily disproved through reference to the Continent. As has been already stated, the development of good quality roads had facilitated the suppression of banditry in France and Italy,⁸⁰¹ meaning that 'modern' roads could be advocated both as a benefit for the defence of the bailiwicks and the maintenance of law and order.

⁷⁹⁷ The population of St. Peter Port grew from 4,350 to approximately 11,000; the population of Guernsey as a whole grew from 10,246 to 18,655. See Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port', pp. 65-66

⁷⁹⁸ Johnson, *A Short History of Guernsey*, p. 52

⁷⁹⁹ 'Speech of Major-General Doyle', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 13-14

⁸⁰⁰ Le Cras, *Guide to the Island of Jersey*, p. 102

⁸⁰¹ Best, *War and Society*, p. 22

Ignorance of Military Theory

In addition to these 'moralist' protesters, the Channel Islands' country parishes also provided the main support base for a group of enthusiastic but ill-informed amateur strategists who sought to acquaint Don and Doyle with their opinions respecting the reform of the roads. As has been already mentioned, the compulsory nature of local militia service, together with the fact that all officers and ncos had served as privates in their early years, ensured that all men, irrespective of rank, attained the same degree of basic training.⁸⁰² However, while attempts to educate the militiamen in the basics of military strategy and encourage independence of thought amongst company-grade officers and ncos may have greatly improved the efficiency of the militia (see chapter two),⁸⁰³ it also served as a double-edged sword. In particular, it must be remembered that this education was carried out within the 'part-time' structure of the militia drills rather than through a dedicated military college, creating a large number of half-informed amateur strategists who, while having the best interests of the Islands at heart, nonetheless caused their respective Commanders-in-Chief a great deal of angst.⁸⁰⁴ Just as the *Ancien Régime* saw over fifty schemes proposed for the invasion of the Channel Islands – the majority of which were never put into operation⁸⁰⁵ – so Don and Doyle were flooded with comments and criticism over the government's plan for the defence of the bailiwicks.⁸⁰⁶

The chief problem caused by these amateurs was that, while they may well have been driven by a desire to 'do their bit' with respect to local defence, their

⁸⁰² Le Couteur to Don, April 27th 1806, reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 41

⁸⁰³ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, 'Circular from Le Couteur to the Colonels of Militia', April 21st 1800

⁸⁰⁴ 'Speech of Major-General Doyle', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 13-14

⁸⁰⁵ Podger, 'Nest of Vypers', p. 90

⁸⁰⁶ Johnson, *A Short History of Guernsey*, p. 52

actions served only to delay the implementation of the plans already approved by government. More importantly, not only were the criticisms of the military roads built upon a fundamental misunderstanding of their purpose, but they appear, in many cases, to have wilfully misrepresented the nature of the road scheme (see above). In addition to the erroneous claim that the poorly-maintained *chemins* might serve as a trap for an invader, it was also assumed that the French would be wholly ignorant as to the nature of the local roads, and particularly those leading to St. Helier and St. Peter Port. However, while Dumouriez – architect of the 1771 Invasion of Jersey – may have deserted from the Army of the Republic in April 1793 (see chapter three), it is likely that other veterans of that campaign remained in its ranks. Moreover, even if the frequent reports of French spies and double-agents⁸⁰⁷ had no basis in reality, it must be remembered that many of the Breton-Norman conscripts swept up by the French army would have enjoyed frequent peacetime contact with Channel Islands, either as merchants or labourers.⁸⁰⁸

As Doyle observed in his abovementioned speech, if the existing state of the *chemins* offered a tactical advantage outweighing that provided by good-quality roads, the enemy would not be adopting the techniques of Telford or Trésaguet, but would be ‘narrowing or breaking up their roads’.⁸⁰⁹ Overall, therefore, the chief error on the part of his critics appears to have stemmed from a belief that any advantages offered by the military roads would be more readily apparent to the enemy than the defenders. Consequently, both Don and Doyle took care to emphasise that the new roads formed only one aspect of a much broader

⁸⁰⁷ TNA, HO 69/10, Le Couteur to D’Auvergne, March 27th 1795; HO 69/12/3, Thomas Saumarez to D’Auvergne, May 26th 1797; and HO 98/9, Gordon to Pelham, January 26th 1803

⁸⁰⁸ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, ‘Circular from Le Couteur to the *Connétables*’, January 28th 1802

⁸⁰⁹ ‘Speech of Major-General Doyle’, reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 18-19

scheme of defence, providing as a means by which the Islands' various fortifications and batteries might be combined into a single network.⁸¹⁰ In 1809, for example, Don proposed the creation of three 'grand military stations' – one each at St. Ouen's Heights, St. Aubin's Bay and Grouville Heights – with smaller stations at Noirmont, Greve de Lecq, Sorel Point, Bonne Nuit, Bouley Bay, Rozel, and St. Catherine's Bay. Following their connection, along with that of the military roads, it was predicted that 'the divisional corps [might] aid each other', and that 'troops of every description might advance with rapidity to any point menaced or attacked'.⁸¹¹

However, the most significant measure adopted by Don and Doyle in their attempt to discredit opposition was that of inviting members of the States to attend the garrison and militia field exercises, allowing their critics to see for themselves the value of the military roads. The first such demonstration was held in December 1806, following the completion of the military road between St. Helier and Grouville,⁸¹² but a far more detailed picture is provided by a report of the exercises of May 1808, held on the new road between Third Tower (St. Aubin) and the Parish Church of St. Ouen. Having been mustered in St. Aubin's Bay, the troops⁸¹³ were ordered to repulse an attempted landing on the northern flank of St. Ouen's Bay and engage in a systematic search for any enemy detachments which might have succeeded in getting inland. Then, it being imagined that the enemy had been checked and that their remaining forces were attempting to land at St. Aubin, an order was given for the artillery and cavalry to detach from the main column, conduct a countermarch, and oppose

⁸¹⁰ *SJA*, A/A1/2, Letter of August 7th 1806

⁸¹¹ *SJA*, L/F/106/A/1, 'Report Submitted by Don to 'Gentlemen Unknown'', August 13th 1809

⁸¹² *SJA*, A/A1/2, Letters of December 25th 1806

⁸¹³ No record exists as to how many troops were involved, but the Militia Horse Artillery, Militia Light Infantry and Royal Jersey Horse Troop are all mentioned in the report.

the new attack.⁸¹⁴ As with the exercise of 1806, the conclusion of Don and his colleagues was emphatic: 'the speedy transport of artillery and troops to the different parts of the coast...must appear so clearly to every person who was present...that it is unnecessary to make any [further] comment'.⁸¹⁵

More Widespread Opposition

As has been mentioned, opposition to the construction of the military roads in Guernsey was particularly vocal: the final 'supplementary communication' – a *périphérique* (ring-road) around the coast of the island – was not completed until 1812.⁸¹⁶ Although initial construction in Jersey was more rapid – the military road between St. Helier and Grouville Bay being opened only months after Don's arrival⁸¹⁷ – the network as a whole remained incomplete by the time that he departed for Gibraltar in 1814.⁸¹⁸ In both bailiwicks, the main catalyst for opposition to the military roads was provided by a combination of ignorance and misunderstanding concerning the prospective value of the scheme, both in relation to local defensive needs and the socio-economic benefits which might be derived from a modernised road system. When, for example, the editors of the *Jersey and Guernsey Magazine* wrote a belated eulogy to Don in 1837,⁸¹⁹ they asked their readers to recall 'the many prejudices he had to overcome, and the difficulty he had in persuading the country people that good roads were to their advantage'.⁸²⁰ However, it must be acknowledged that the inhabitants also resisted the construction of the military roads on economic grounds, and that

⁸¹⁴ 'Translation of a States Report on 3s Carried Out on the New Military Road in the Parishes of St. Peter and St Ouen', May 28th 1808, reproduced in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 32-33

⁸¹⁵ *SJA*, A/A1/2, Letters of December 25th 1806

⁸¹⁶ *SJA*, L/F/95/B/1, Don to Doyle, August 25th 1810

⁸¹⁷ *SJA*, A/A1/2, Letter of December 25th 1806

⁸¹⁸ Davies, *Coastal Towers*, p. 48

⁸¹⁹ Don had died in 1832.

⁸²⁰ J. Duncan, (ed.), *The Guernsey and Jersey Magazine, Volumes Three and Four* (London, 1837) p. 43

their fears of increased taxation were adjudged by Johnson to be 'the most valid reason' for opposition to the roads.⁸²¹

Beginning with the objection on the grounds of damage to property, it is true that the construction of the military roads entailed the buying-up of a considerable amount of private land. Since they were designed to permit the deployment of troops to the most likely landing-places by the most direct route,⁸²² it was necessary that the new roads be built as straight as possible, in the manner of Roman roads. Although the *chemins du roi* could serve as a template for the new roads,⁸²³ the *chemins du huit pieds* and *chemins du quatre pieds* were too narrow and winding to be of any use in this respect, and those crossing the path of the new military roads were simply demolished. Moreover, a system similar to enclosure⁸²⁴ was employed to permit the military roads to cut across private land: a policy which was implemented primarily in the northern parishes of Jersey and the parish of St. Brelade.⁸²⁵ In Guernsey, the destruction of private property was less problematic, since only two principal military roads were constructed; one running from St. Peter Port to Vazon Bay, and the other from St. Peter Port to L'Erée Bay.⁸²⁶ Although this difference in scale was a natural consequence of Guernsey being only two-thirds the size of Jersey, it also reflected the fact that the former possessed far fewer points at which an enemy might be able to land in strength.⁸²⁷

⁸²¹ Johnson, *A Short History of Guernsey*, p. 52.

⁸²² SJA, L/F/106/A/1, 'Report by General Don to 'Gentlemen Unknown'', August 13th 1809

⁸²³ 'Translation of an Account of the States sitting of December 23rd 1806', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 32-33

⁸²⁴ M. Olson Jr., *The Economics of Wartime Shortage: A History of British Food Supplies in the Napoleonic War and in World Wars One and Two* (Durham, North Carolina, 1963) p. 58

⁸²⁵ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of March 14th 1811

⁸²⁶ Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, p. 177

⁸²⁷ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of June 8th 1807

Turning to the matter of expense, there are a number of reasons as to why this was considered to be one of the more logical objections entertained on the part of the local population, and why, therefore, it was treated with greater seriousness by the Lieutenant-Governors. First and foremost, in addition to the need to drive the new roads across privately-owned land, the construction of the military communications was dependent upon a number of other civil engineering projects, all of which entailed costs to the public purse. Jersey, for example, was crossed in a north-south direction by several streams and brooks (see map p), and while none was comparable to the fast-flowing rivers in Corsica,⁸²⁸ it was still necessary for their courses to be diverted in order to protect the new roads from the ever-present risk of flooding.⁸²⁹ For example, although the stream in question was so shallow as to be able to be crossed on foot,⁸³⁰ the construction of the new military road at St. Aubin's barracks required the building of a wall to divert the stream running down from Westmount. Not only did this serve to protect the new road from being flooded, but it also prevented the stream from overflowing into the barrack privy, reducing the potential for the outbreak of disease amongst the troops (see chapter two).⁸³¹

However, possibly the most important piece of civil engineering to take place in the Channel Islands during the Great French War was the reclamation of the *Braye du Valle*, a tidal channel which then separated the *Clos du Valle* from the rest of the Parish of Vale. The daily flooding of the *Braye* led to the creation of a salt marsh approximately 814 Guernsey *vergées* (0.5 square miles) in area,⁸³²

⁸²⁸ Gregory, *The Ungovernable Rock*, p. 22

⁸²⁹ SJA, A/A1/5, Letter of November 11th 1811

⁸³⁰ Johnson, *A Short History of Guernsey*, p. 51

⁸³¹ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of February 17th 1811

⁸³² Anon, *The Stranger's Guide to the Islands of Guernsey and Jersey, Embracing a Brief History of their Situation, Extent, Population, Laws and Customs* (Guernsey, 1833) p. 105

and although the resultant saltpans had been exploited by a number of local merchants,⁸³³ it presented Doyle with three serious problems *vis-à-vis* local defence. Firstly, the area was totally unsuitable for the construction of a military road, since even at low tide, the only access to the *Clos du Valle* was via three small fords.⁸³⁴ Secondly, the tidal island of *Clos du Valle* – if occupied by an enemy force of sufficient strength as to hold it against assault – could be easily transformed into a secure position from which to bombard the northern flank of both the town and harbour of St. Peter Port.⁸³⁵ Finally, the daily flooding of the *Braye* meant that the *Clos du Valle* might be rendered secure – especially at high tide – against a land-based assault, providing an enemy with a base from which to mount an attack on the rest of the Island.⁸³⁶

As with the construction of the military roads themselves, the draining of the *Braye* attracted significant opposition: both from the owners of the saltpans – who stood to lose a major source of income – and the landowners who were forced to surrender valuable cultivable land. Again, Duncan records that the protests made against the project were an example of ‘the most ignorant opposition from those who benefited the most from it’,⁸³⁷ but Doyle appears to have adopted a similar approach to that which he had employed in 1803 (see above). Working on the principle that, when properly informed of all the relevant facts, his critics would quickly find themselves in agreement with the government’s proposals, Doyle addressed the principal inhabitants of Vale at a public meeting,⁸³⁸ and it is recorded that his ‘tact and perseverance’ carried the

⁸³³ Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, p. 567

⁸³⁴ Anon, *The Stranger’s Guide to the Islands of Guernsey and Jersey*, p. 105

⁸³⁵ J. Marr, *History of the Bailiwick of Guernsey*, (London, 1982) p. 158

⁸³⁶ Berry, *The History of the Island of Guernsey*, p. 217

⁸³⁷ Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, p. 177

⁸³⁸ ‘Speech of Major-General Doyle’, reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 14

day.⁸³⁹ However, it is likely that a considerable incentive was also provided by the amount of compensation which was paid out to those affected by the scheme. While the saltpans were purchased from Messrs. Hardy and Le Mesurier on September 15th 1805 for the sum of £1,750, a further £1,500 was awarded as compensation on January 26th 1806 to the principal landowners of the parish, which included the Marchant, Sau(s)marez, and Dobrée families.⁸⁴⁰

Financing the Military Roads

The reclamation of the *Braye* was of great value in terms of the defence of Guernsey: just as Dover's northern flank was screened by fortifications on the Western Heights,⁸⁴¹ so fortifications on the *Braye* could now support those on the *Clos du Valle* in defence of St. Peter Port. Indeed, the stretch of coast bordering Ancresse Common was the most heavily defended outside of St. Peter Port itself; of the fifteen Conway Towers built in Guernsey during 1778-79, six were situated in Ancresse Bay, while two more flanked the western end of the *Braye*.⁸⁴² By 1815, these defences had been augmented by the construction of Pembroke Fort and Le Marchant Fort (mounting three 24-pdrs and six 24-pdrs respectively) as well as four coastal batteries in Ancresse Bay (mounting a total of three 24-pdrs, nine 20-pdrs and one 9-pdr).⁸⁴³ In addition, while the measure itself was by no means universally welcomed, the reclaimed land was subsequently sold off for £5,000, this sum being gifted by Doyle to the States of Guernsey on the condition that it was used to finance the construction of the

⁸³⁹ Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, p. 177

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 565-566

⁸⁴¹ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 281

⁸⁴² Grimsley, *The Martello Tower*, pp. 17-25

⁸⁴³ Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 234

island's military roads.⁸⁴⁴ Although the issue of funding was acknowledged by the Lieutenant-Governor as having gained the greatest credence amongst the population, he dismissed it nonetheless as 'a raw head and bloody-bones held out...in order to scare the people'.⁸⁴⁵

In the same way that amateur military theorists were not shy in putting forward their own recommendations for the defence of the Islands, it appears that a small number of the abovementioned 'worthy gentlemen' appointed themselves as financial advisors to the States. While it is possible that their calculations represented a genuine attempt to estimate the total cost of the military roads, the sums which they arrived at were quickly dismissed by Doyle and his colleagues as being wildly inaccurate. Indeed, one commentator claimed that the roads would cost £1,500 per mile, while another – a man who the Lieutenant-Governor described as having 'out-Heroded Herod' – predicted that the total cost might reach £50,000'. In addition to these ill-informed critics, Doyle identified the existence of another group of detractors: men who – while not publicly opposed to the idea of the military roads – declared that the scheme should be funded entirely by voluntary subscription, rather than through taxation. Although subscription had already proved successful in Alderney – in 1798, Le Mesurier had funded the purchase of four 9-pdrs and two 6-pdrs by means of a 'public and voluntary fund'⁸⁴⁶ – public taxation was rendered yet more unpopular by a rumour that each inhabitant would be required to pay as much as 2s 6d per quarter.⁸⁴⁷

⁸⁴⁴ Johnson, *A Short History of Guernsey*, p. 52

⁸⁴⁵ 'Speech of Major-General Doyle', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 20-21

⁸⁴⁶ TNA, WO 1/606, Le Mesurier to Dundas, April 24th 1798

⁸⁴⁷ 'Speech of Major-General Doyle', reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 20-21

Although it is perhaps easy to understand why such widespread objection should have arisen with respect to the tax, it is also clear that Doyle was fully justified in describing the general population as having been misled by ‘a raw head and bloody bones’. First and foremost, the public speculation as to the overall cost of the military roads was vastly at odds with the actual figure: for example, even after taking account of the need to compensate the landowners, Don’s official estimate for the military road between St. Helier to St. Aubin gave a figure of only £7,000.⁸⁴⁸ As for Guernsey’s two military roads, Don’s estimates placed the total cost at no more than £2,000 each, including compensation, with annual maintenance costs of £20 per mile,⁸⁴⁹ and even the highest estimates put forward by the States of Guernsey set the cost of the entire road project at only £8,773, exclusive of compensation.⁸⁵⁰ Consequently, it can be seen that the cost of the Channel Islands’ military roads was comparable to that of the 1,100 miles of military roads constructed in Scotland in the wake of the Jacobite Risings.⁸⁵¹ During the mid-eighteenth century, estimates for the maintenance costs of both the Highland and Lowland roads fluctuated between £18 and £25 per mile, while during the 1810s, the cost was estimated at between £7 4s and £11 16s per mile.⁸⁵²

Overall, many of the objections raised with respect to the employment of an *ad hoc* tax proved to be just as misplaced as those raised over the construction of the roads themselves. Again, Don and Doyle were able to cite a clear precedent for the implementation of a tax: during the latter half of the eighteenth century,

⁸⁴⁸ *SJA*, A/A5/2, Letter of October 10th 1809

⁸⁴⁹ *SJA*, A/A1/3, Letter of June 15th 1810

⁸⁵⁰ Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, p. 177-8

⁸⁵¹ J.S. Stephen, ‘History of Roads in the Highlands’ PhD Thesis, (University of Aberdeen, 1936)

Abstract

⁸⁵² Taylor, *The Military Roads in Scotland*, pp. 95 and 114

the States of Jersey and Guernsey had used this method to raise funds for a number of local projects. The most important – at least within the context of this thesis – were the construction of a new prison in each Bailiwick (see chapter five) and the completion of the new breakwater for the harbour at St. Peter Port (see chapter six).⁸⁵³ Furthermore, in spite of the abovementioned rumours that it would be necessary to levy an income tax of 2s 6d per quarter, Doyle was able to demonstrate that this was yet another wild over-exaggeration, and that the sum required of each rate-payer would not exceed 9d per quarter.⁸⁵⁴ Even with the sizeable disparity between the two figures, it was estimated that this tax, if raised over 134,000 quarters – two years, based on a population of 16,750 taxpayers – would still generate more than £5,000 towards the total cost of the road scheme.⁸⁵⁵ Again, the comparison with Scotland shows up favourably: according to an Act of 1819, the Treasury was obliged to find a sum of £5,000 for the upkeep of the Highland roads, but this is believed to have equated to one quarter of the overall cost.⁸⁵⁶

In addition to the States and the inhabitants having a ‘shared responsibility’ to meet the cost of the Channel Islands’ military roads, the cost of implementing the scheme was also met through the provision of several thousand pounds from both the British government and private investors. In April 1807, for example, the King personally granted £1,000 to the military roads project in Jersey, a sum equal to that drawn on the Treasury during the same month for the maintenance of the island’s towers and batteries.⁸⁵⁷ Similarly, although the States had advanced £2,020 3s 6d towards the construction of the second of

⁸⁵³ SJA, A/A1/3, Letter of December 28th 1809

⁸⁵⁴ ‘Speech of Major-General Doyle’, reproduced in full in Sullivan, *General Don*, pp. 21-23

⁸⁵⁵ Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, pp. 177-178

⁸⁵⁶ Taylor, *The Military Roads in Scotland*, p. 114

⁸⁵⁷ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of April 28th 1807

Guernsey's military roads (see above), it was announced that the British government had allotted the Engineers a budget of £10,000 for the upkeep of the road system as a whole.⁸⁵⁸ At the same time, both Don and Doyle were also employing a number of cost-cutting measures to decrease the strain on the public purse, particularly the employment of the inhabitants as a conscripted labour force. As explained above, the inhabitants of each parish were required to assist in the upkeep of the roads,⁸⁵⁹ while Gordon had employed working parties from each *Vingtaine* to assist in the repair of defences damaged by bad weather.⁸⁶⁰ This latter system was both expanded and formalised in the later years of the Great French War:⁸⁶¹ by 1807, the working parties had been placed under the command of officers of the *Police Honorifique*, and were grouped into 'divisions' commanded by militia officers.⁸⁶²

Finally, it must be noted that several 'conventional' methods were employed to reduce the cost of the military roads: in addition to the above-mentioned tax, it was decided to capitalise on the Islands' extensive trade in Portuguese wines and French wines and spirits, increasing import duty on these items by 3d.⁸⁶³ Furthermore, in line with a suggestion made by those inhabitants who had spoken in opposition to the use of general taxation, both Don and Doyle agreed to allow the setting up of a public subscription. According to the former, the money so raised allowed the communication from St. Aubin to St. Helier to be completed 'without any charge against [the British] government or the States'.⁸⁶⁴

Most innovative, however, was Don's decision to use a public lottery as a

⁸⁵⁸ TNA, HO 98/33, Doyle to Beckett, January 29th 1811

⁸⁵⁹ SJA, A/A1/6, Letter of April 11th 1812

⁸⁶⁰ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Notes for September 20th and October 6th, 13th, 20th and 24th 1804

⁸⁶¹ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of September 26th 1811

⁸⁶² SJA, F/M/R1/34A, 'Circular Regarding the Parts of the Parishes that are to be Fortified if the Enemy Attacks, and the Help Needed from the Working Men of the Parish', October 31st, 1807

⁸⁶³ SJA, A/A1/6, Letter of September 21st 1806

⁸⁶⁴ SJA, A/A5/2, Letter of October 10th 1809

means to 'seize upon the mind of a speculative Jerseyman': even after deducting £60,000 in prizes and approximately £1,200 in running costs, the lottery still raised £10,800 for of the military roads.⁸⁶⁵ Unfortunately, no record has survived to show how the profits were distributed, but given that Don estimated the total cost of the military road between St. Helier and St. Aubin at no more than £7,000,⁸⁶⁶ it is reasonable to suggest that at least part of this profit was used to fund the other military roads in the island.

The last great 'cost-cutting' measure employed with respect to the construction of the military roads was one which had been employed with great effect in the Scottish Highlands;⁸⁶⁷ namely, the use of military working parties to assist the contracted civilian labour force. By the time that construction of the military roads was underway in 1809, a similar system was already familiar to the Channel Islands' garrisons; regimental working parties being employed, along with the military artificers and engineers, in the construction of Fort Regent (see chapter three).⁸⁶⁸ In the case of the military roads, detachments of garrison infantry were deployed in all parts of the Islands: in June 1810, for example, a party of forty-three men was posted to the military communication from Mont Felard to St. Lawrence, while fifty-three men assisted with the construction of the road from Bouley Bay to St. Helier.⁸⁶⁹ The following year, similar detachments were tasked with the repair of the military roads in St. Ouen's Bay and St. Lawrence,⁸⁷⁰ and in 1812, further parties spearheaded work on the

⁸⁶⁵ Ragg, *A Popular History of Jersey*, p. 11; and 'Schematic of a Lottery Proposed by Lieutenant-Governor George Don', reproduced in Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 60

⁸⁶⁶ *SJA*, A/A5/2, Letter of October 10th 1809

⁸⁶⁷ Black, *Military Revolution*, p. 85

⁸⁶⁸ *SJA*, A/A5/2, Letter of March 4th 1809

⁸⁶⁹ *SJA*, A/A1/3, Letters of June 22nd 1810

⁸⁷⁰ *SJA*, A/A1/5, Letter of November 5th and December 14th 1811

smaller communications at Grouville, Le Hocq and Archirondel.⁸⁷¹ Not only did the use of conscripted military labour represent a significant saving,⁸⁷² but it enabled the roads to be constructed at great speed, the communication between St. Aubin to St. Helier being built in only four months.⁸⁷³

The Effectiveness of the Military Roads – Binding Together the Defences

In terms of the advantages provided by the military roads, the resultant mobility afforded to the troops was of crucial importance: not least because, in the event of an enemy landing, the coastal defences were intended only to delay the disembarkation of an enemy force (see chapter three). As with the south coast of England, it was perceived that the rapid arrival of infantry, cavalry and field artillery via the military roads would, in company with the towers, allow for the infliction of mass slaughter upon that enemy.⁸⁷⁴ As Don observed, the coast of Jersey was 'extremely well calculated for the combined movements of cavalry and infantry',⁸⁷⁵ and the abovementioned field exercises provided ample evidence – albeit theoretical – that the roads would enhance significantly the mobility of the local troops. Moreover, while no actual invasion took place, it is still possible to make reasonably accurate predictions as to the manner in which the various elements of the Islands' defences would have been enabled to coordinate their operations in the event of an enemy invasion. This is achieved primarily by comparing the routes of the principal roads with the placement of the various defences and other facilities which had been constructed earlier in the war (see chapter three).

⁸⁷¹ Ibid, Letters of March 9th, May 26th and June 11th 1812

⁸⁷² Ibid, Letter of November 24th 1811

⁸⁷³ SJA, A/A5/2, Letter of October 10th 1809

⁸⁷⁴ Longmate, *Island Fortress*, pp. 274-275

⁸⁷⁵ SJA, A/A1/1, Letters of September 18th 1807

The largest and most important of the military roads constructed in Jersey were the three which joined together to create a continuous line of communication from St. Ouen in the west to Gorey in the east, via the towns of St. Aubin and St. Helier.⁸⁷⁶ As Don had observed in 1806, the benefits of the new military roads would facilitate ‘the speedy transport of artillery and troops to [all] the different parts of the coast’,⁸⁷⁷ however, the road from St. Aubin to St. Helier – running along the landward side of the pre-existing defences⁸⁷⁸ – had the additional benefit of enabling troops to pass between the two towns at any time of day. Prior to the construction of this road, the extensive sand dunes inland of the bay had forced both military and commercial traffic to cross from St. Aubin to St. Helier via the beach; a route which, like the fords across the *Braye du Valle* in Guernsey (see above) was impassable at high tide. In total, eighteen military roads were constructed in Jersey (see map p), but in Guernsey, the final programme (see map o) was smaller even than that which Doyle had envisioned, his original proposal having called for four main roads to be built between Fort George, L’Ancresse, Rocquaine and Vason.⁸⁷⁹

Of the military communications constructed in Jersey, the majority of these were of secondary importance, in that they assisted in the defence of the plethora of smaller bays which indented the coast. Although previous descents on the Island had targeted the larger bays on the western and southern coasts (see chapter three), the success with which smugglers had operated out of the isolated northern bays demonstrated that these might easily allow for the

⁸⁷⁶ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, ‘Report by General Don to ‘Gentlemen Unknown’’, August 13th 1809

⁸⁷⁷ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of December 25th 1806

⁸⁷⁸ SJA, A/A5/2, Letter of July 9th 1809

⁸⁷⁹ TNA, HO 98/33, ‘State of the Coast of Guernsey’, July 25th 1809

landing of diversionary attacks.⁸⁸⁰ According to Don, there were seven points around the coast of Jersey where the enemy might make a landing,⁸⁸¹ and the 'second rank' military roads provided a key solution to the problem of defending these isolated stretches of coast. In terms of strategic value, however, the most important of the 'minor' military roads were those which connected St. Helier to St. John and St. Martin,⁸⁸² since these communications served as access routes to the four small bays which had received the greatest amount of reinforcement since 1792. In the former parish, Bonne Nuit was defended by three batteries mounting a total of four 12-pdrs and two 18-pdrs,⁸⁸³ and Grève de Lecq by a Conway Tower and two batteries mounting four 12-pdrs and two 6-pdrs.⁸⁸⁴ In the latter parish, St. Catherine's Bay was defended by three Conway Towers and three batteries mounting three 24-pdrs and four 18-pdrs, and Rozel Bay by five batteries mounting two 12-pdrs and five 6-pdrs.⁸⁸⁵

However, in order to maximise the defensive advantages of the military roads, both Islands were provided with a number of smaller communications to replace the *chemins du huit pieds et quatre pieds*. Unlike the main 'military roads', these were not designed to permit the passage of large or mixed-arms columns, but for more specialised purposes; for example, a series of small communications was built in Jersey to connect the twelve parish churches.⁸⁸⁶ This circulatory route served the dual purpose of providing the militia regiments to access their respective arsenals⁸⁸⁷ and permitting the militia artillery – whose guns were stored at the parish churches – to be deployed in strength against an enemy

⁸⁸⁰ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of August 13th 1806

⁸⁸¹ SJA, L/F/95/A/2, Don to Spencer, May 22nd 1806

⁸⁸² SJA, L/F/106/A/1, Report by General Don to 'Gentlemen Unknown', August 13th 1809

⁸⁸³ These guns were all salvaged from French ships which had been wrecked off the coast of the Island.

⁸⁸⁴ The two 6-pdrs were later replaced with three 12-pdrs.

⁸⁸⁵ Two of the 6-pdrs were later replaced by 12-pdrs.

⁸⁸⁶ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, 'Report by General Don to 'Gentlemen Unknown'', August 13th 1809

⁸⁸⁷ SJA, A/A1/6, Letter of September 16th 1810

landing.⁸⁸⁸ Similarly, a number of ‘infantry communications’ were built in both islands – the intention being to provide skirmishers or light troops with the means to rapidly reinforce the most likely points of assault⁸⁸⁹ – the most important of these being a circulatory route around the coast of each island.⁸⁹⁰ In addition, two infantry communications were built in Jersey: one from Mont Orgueil Castle to Grosnez Point, the other from Petit Port to Noirmont Point;⁸⁹¹ while an artillery communication connected St. Ouen’s Bay, St. Brelade’s Bay and Greve de Lecq across the sand-dunes of Le Quennevais.⁸⁹²

Finally, at least some mention is required of Alderney – dubbed variously the ‘Gibraltar of the Channel’ and the ‘Buckler of England’⁸⁹³ – since although few records survive pertaining to the construction of its military roads, the island was of vital strategic importance (see chapter three).⁸⁹⁴ As Don emphasised, not only did its coastal defences help to protect the approach to Guernsey’s northern coast, but it also served as a base from which scout vessels could monitor French shipping (see chapter eight).⁸⁹⁵ Alderney was by far the closest island to the enemy coast,⁸⁹⁶ and a number of small-scale raids in the early months of the war⁸⁹⁷ had demonstrated its vulnerability to an expedition akin to that mounted against Jersey in 1781.⁸⁹⁸ As a result, the first of the two military roads constructed in Alderney (see map n) led from the town of St. Anne, in the

⁸⁸⁸ T. Lyte, *A Sketch of the History and the Present State of the Island of Jersey* (London, 1808) p. 88

⁸⁸⁹ SJA, L/F/95/A/2, Don to Spencer, May 22nd 1806

⁸⁹⁰ SJA, L/F/95/B/1, Don to Doyle, August 25th 1810 and A/A1/4, Letter of March 14th 1811

⁸⁹¹ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of March 14th 1811

⁸⁹² Ibid, Letter of April 12th 1812

⁸⁹³ C.P. Le Huray, *The Bailiwick of Guernsey* (London, 1952) p. 250

⁸⁹⁴ SJA, L/F/95/A/20, ‘Letter from Don to ‘My Dear Sir’ Concerning Memorandum in Relation to the Defence of Alderney, the Building of Towers and Positioning of Guns’, August 15th 1807

⁸⁹⁵ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, ‘Report by General Don to ‘Gentlemen Unknown’’, August 13th 1809 and L/F/95/B/9, Don to ‘My Dear Sir’, October 27th 1811

⁸⁹⁶ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of March 29th 1808

⁸⁹⁷ *The Times*, February 14th 1793 and November 11th 1793

⁸⁹⁸ TNA, WO 1/606, Le Mesurier to Brownrigg, October 24th 1797

centre of the island, to Braye Harbour on the north coast, the largest and most accessible anchorage. This was defended by York Battery – mounting ten 18-pdrs, two 6-pdrs and two howitzers – along with Grosnez, Rozelle and Braye Batteries, which mounted a total of one 32-pdr, seven 18-pdrs, seven 9-pdrs and two 9-pdr carronades.⁸⁹⁹ As for the second road, which ran along the length of the island, this facilitated the reinforcement of Longis Bay,⁹⁰⁰ defended by a total of two 32-pdr guns, six 20-pdr guns, three 18-pdr guns, seven 9-pdr guns, two 6-pdr guns, two 32-pdr carronades, two 24-pdr carronades, and one 6-pdr carronade.⁹⁰¹

The Final Assessment of the Roads

In order to assess the success of the construction of the military roads, it is necessary to turn again to the vision of Don and Doyle for the defence of the bailiwicks; namely, that each island should be able to act both as an independent fortification⁹⁰² and as part of an integrated system.⁹⁰³ Certainly, the military roads can be seen to have been implemented with total success, and – more importantly – at a cost which was far below the forecast made by the government, the taxpayer, and those scaremongers who cast the roads as a lavish ‘white elephant’. Not only did they provide the defenders with access to every point on the coast which might be targeted by the enemy, but more importantly, they enabled infantry, cavalry and artillery to work in concert with the static defences.⁹⁰⁴ Moreover, it was now possible for the defending forces to

⁸⁹⁹ See Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 289

⁹⁰⁰ Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, Vol. I, pp. 91-93 and Vol. II, p. 86

⁹⁰¹ See Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 291

⁹⁰² Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 17

⁹⁰³ *SJA*, L/F/95/B/9, Don to ‘My Dear Sir’, October 27th 1811

⁹⁰⁴ Longmate, *Island Fortress*, pp. 274-275

move with a greater degree of speed and mobility to meet an attack, and to make complex alterations to the line and direction of march without having to contend with a maze of narrow roads.⁹⁰⁵ Consequently, the completion of the roads also enabled the full military exploitation of the signal stations, since not only would the local commanders be kept constantly updated as to the enemy's movements,⁹⁰⁶ but they would be able to redeploy the local troops in response to the changing threat.⁹⁰⁷

In addition to these strategic and tactical benefits, the military roads also assisted in meeting the Commanders' objectives in improving troop health: as Davies notes, almost every foot of coastline in both bailiwicks was now accessible to infantry, even when fully laden with equipment.⁹⁰⁸ As a result, even in cases where they might be faced with a vastly superior force – the main concern which spurred critiques like Inglis⁹⁰⁹ – the defenders would still be fit to engage the enemy in a pitched battle.⁹¹⁰ Such an advantage was vital, and not only because the vulnerability of the Channel Islands to simultaneous assault from multiple directions might oblige the defenders to fight several skirmishes in turn. The need for such provision was further exacerbated by the high numbers of sick and injured men recorded among the garrison in 1806 and 1807, as well as by the fact that a large proportion of the defensive force was comprised of invalids and veterans unfit for service in the field (see chapter three). Ultimately, the issue of troop health is the most telling factor in proving the advantage of the military roads, and it is the one factor which none of the contemporary critics

⁹⁰⁵ SJA, A/A1/2, Letters of December 25th 1806

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid, Letters of January 2nd and 12th 1807

⁹⁰⁷ SJA, L/F/95/B/1, Don to Doyle, August 25th 1810

⁹⁰⁸ Davies, *Fort Regent*, p. 48

⁹⁰⁹ Inglis, *The Channel Islands*, p. 27

⁹¹⁰ Davies, *Fort Regent*, p. 48

of the scheme appear to have considered. Although disease continued to trouble the garrison throughout the War,⁹¹¹ the elimination of the need to use either the old *chemins* or the sewer-like cobbled streets of St. Helier, St. Aubin and St. Peter Port significantly helped to contain future outbreaks.⁹¹²

⁹¹¹ *SJA*, A/A1/3, Letter of April 24th 1810

⁹¹² De Saxe, *Art of War*, p. 4

Chapter Five – Security and Internal Stability

In light of various measures adopted by the British government over the course of the Great French War, it is clear that, regardless of their changing fortunes in other theatres, the risk of invasion from the Continent continued to occupy a dominant position with respect to strategic policy. In 1796, the Supplementary Militia Act had sought to raise an additional 60,000 men,⁹¹³ and by 1804, the strength of the militia had increased to 85,000 men,⁹¹⁴ similarly, between 1798 and 1804, the volunteers expanded from 116,000 to 380,000 men.⁹¹⁵ More importantly, while critics emphasised the enormous cost of the auxiliary force – £200,000 *per annum* for the sea fencibles – and mocked the troops as having ‘no other use than to calm the fears of old ladies’,⁹¹⁶ it must be remembered that the threat of invasion continued until 1812 (see chapter three). Indeed, while some recruits may well have treated enlistment in the auxiliary force as a chance to ‘escape [from] drudgery and mundane obligations’, experience ‘a pleasurable sense of risk and imminent drama’, or simply indulge ‘fantasy and wishful thinking’, such men would have been in the minority.⁹¹⁷ With respect to the majority of auxiliaries, it is far more likely that they were – in the words of Major-General Sir John Moore and General John Maitland – ‘not at all dismayed at the prospect of meeting the French’, and motivated by ‘every degree of attachment to their country’.⁹¹⁸

⁹¹³ Colley, *Britons*, p. 302

⁹¹⁴ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 48

⁹¹⁵ Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p. 66

⁹¹⁶ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, pp. 49 and 170

⁹¹⁷ Colley, *Britons*, p. 325-6

⁹¹⁸ P.A. Lloyd, *The French Are Coming: The Invasion Scare of 1803-05* (Tunbridge Wells, 1991), cited in Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, pp. 49-50

Consequently, while it is true that the ultimate security of both Great Britain and the Channel Islands rested upon the regular army, Royal Navy and coastal fortifications, it would be a mistake to dismiss the auxiliary forces as having no value within the context of national or local defence. In February 1806, Keith reported that 2,500 invasion craft were assembled at Boulogne, and estimated that these might be able to transport as many as 169,000 men;⁹¹⁹ while as late as 1811, Horse Guards envisaged that it might prove necessary to recruit up to 400,000 militiamen as a safeguard against invasion.⁹²⁰ Indeed, while their potential value in the face of an enemy invasion may have been questionable, the various auxiliary forces were acknowledged nonetheless as a vital resource within the context of internal security and public order. As highlighted by Colley, recruitment for the volunteers relied heavily upon ‘tales of French oppression and atrocities in other lands’, and the message that ‘only [the recruits] could prevent similar evils from befalling their own shores’.⁹²¹ In addition, the ‘spectres’ of fifth columnists, radicals and spies were ever-present,⁹²² and the ‘hostile resentment’ which characterised the treatment of British radicalism prior to 1793 soon gave way to legislation designed to control aliens and crush ‘traitorous correspondence’ between Britain and the Continent.⁹²³

Far from acting as a ‘moat defensive’ isolating Great Britain from the rest of Europe, the English Channel acted far more in the manner of a ‘selectively permeable membrane’. While both the French and British governments took extensive steps to control migratory traffic, the maritime border continued to be crossed – both in peace and war – by spies, merchants, refugees, prisoners

⁹¹⁹ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 137

⁹²⁰ Knight, ‘British Defensive Strategy at Sea’, p. 91

⁹²¹ Colley, *Britons*, pp. 325-326

⁹²² Harling, ‘A Tale of Two Conflicts’, p. 24

⁹²³ Best, *War and Society*, p. 124 and Morieux, *The Channel*, pp. 229-230 and 296-297

and a host of other 'special interest groups' who were either permitted or encouraged to circumvent such restrictions (see section iii). Within this context, the Channel Islands occupied a key position as a 'border gateway': a strategic function which dated back to at least 1483, when Pope Sixtus IV had issued a bull conferring neutrality upon the bailiwicks. As Governor of the Habsburg Netherlands (1531-55), Mary of Hungary had complained that the English had exploited the situation 'in order to barter freely with the French as often as they like, without hindrance or restriction of any sort'.⁹²⁴ Moreover, while this particular loophole had been closed by William III, the privileges enjoyed by the Channel Islands under the *Constitutions* (see chapter one) meant that they retained *de facto* free port status.⁹²⁵ Consequently, not did they act as an entrepot for illicit high-duty goods (see chapter seven), but subject to provisions laid down by the respective Lieutenant-Governors,⁹²⁶ the citizens of hostile powers were able to use the Channel Islands as a 'back door' into Britain.⁹²⁷

Policing and Law Enforcement

Although the dangers posed by migration were felt more keenly in the Channel Islands than in the remainder of the British Isles, this chapter will demonstrate that many of the threats to the internal security of the respective jurisdictions were broadly similar. The point at which the two situations may be seen to have diverged is with respect to the resources available for dealing with these threats, and more specifically, those which might be called upon – in the

⁹²⁴ Morieux, *The Channel*, p. 251

⁹²⁵ Crossan, *Poverty and Welfare*, p. 12

⁹²⁶ TNA, HO 98/3, Nepean to Falle, January 20th 1793

⁹²⁷ SJA, A/C1/1, General Order of May 11th 1803; TNA, FO 95/615, Letter of July 28th 1803 and 'Request for Information Concerning 'Foreigners', and Especially Irish Nationals', April/May 1804; and SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of January 30th 1808

absence of a 'professional' police – to assist in the enforcement of law and order. As mentioned above, the auxiliary forces were viewed by the British government as a vital asset within the context of maintaining law and order, and this has given rise to the traditional perception of eighteenth-century peacekeeping as one of 'the subjugation of the people by military force'.⁹²⁸ However, while the official response to popular protest has been often depicted as a combination of 'savagery' and 'spectacular incompetence',⁹²⁹ it must be remembered that the authorities – particularly when faced with a large-scale riot⁹³⁰ – possessed few options besides calling upon the assistance of the local soldiery.⁹³¹ Even when – as during the 1796 Militia Riots – the civil powers responded by enrolling 'special constables' or other *ad hoc* officers,⁹³² the volunteers and/or yeomanry continued to be regarded as the principal means of 'suppressing riot and tumult'.⁹³³

In the Channel Islands too, the local military forces – including the garrison, the militia, and the various auxiliary corps (see chapter two) – were often called upon by the civil powers in order to assist in the enforcement of law and order or the apprehension of criminals. In June 1795, for example, reports of 'a barbarous and wantonly cruel murder' led to the Royal Guernsey Light Dragoons – then numbering at least fifty men⁹³⁴ – being ordered to undertake both daytime and night patrols of the rural parishes.⁹³⁵ However, while the

⁹²⁸ Dinwiddy, 'Campaign against Flogging in the Army', pp. 323-324

⁹²⁹ J. Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances in England, 1700-1832*, 2nd Edition (London, 1992) p. 284

⁹³⁰ Notable examples include those at in Birmingham (1791), Bristol (1793), Portsmouth, Leicester (both 1795), and Nottingham (1800). See A. Babington, *Military Intervention in Britain: From the Gordon Riots to the Gibraltar Incident* (Abingdon, 2016) pp. 34-38

⁹³¹ Bayly, *Imperial Meridian*, p. 122; and Cookson, *The British Armed Nation*, p. 29

⁹³² Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 297

⁹³³ Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People*, pp. 71-72

⁹³⁴ TNA, WO 1/603, 'Return of HM Forces Guernsey', January 1st 1795

⁹³⁵ See 'General Orders, June 15th 1795', reproduced in Anon, 'A Barbarous Murder, June 1795', <http://www.priaulxlibrary.co.uk/articles/article/barbarous-murder-june-1795>, accessed August 21st 2017

concept of a 'professional' police force would not gain popular support in the Channel Islands until the 1850s, the local authorities possessed a significant advantage over their British counterparts, in the shape of a formal, though unpaid, civil law enforcement body.⁹³⁶ Overall responsibility for parochial law and order fell to the *Connétable*, although subtle differences existed with respect to their duties in each of the bailiwicks. In Jersey, the ratepayers of each parish elected a single *Connétable*, to whom was given the authority to preside over the *Enditement* – the parochial court – and command the parochial division of the *Police Honorifique* (see below).⁹³⁷ By contrast, each of Guernsey's parishes elected two officers – the 'Senior Constable' presiding over the *Douzaine* (parish council) and the 'Junior Constable' assisting in local policing – with St. Peter Port also appointing four 'Assistant Constables'.⁹³⁸

With respect to Jersey's *Police Honorifique* – which continues to exist alongside and act in cooperation with the modern States of Jersey Police – the origins of this force may be traced to the medieval period. In the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, each parish had been empowered to create a body of men to 'pursue wrongdoers, keep watch at night, guard prisoners in custody, and ensure that suspects seeking refuge in the parish churches did not escape'.⁹³⁹ By the time of the Great French War, these parochial corps had evolved into a paramilitary organisation: the *Connétable* and *Centeniers* being akin to field officers; the *Inspecteurs* and *Procureurs* to staff officers; the *Vingteniers* to ncos; and the *Officiers du Connétable* to privates.⁹⁴⁰ In terms of manpower, the number of *Centeniers* and *Vingteniers* in each parish was proportional to the

⁹³⁶ Miles and Raynor, *Reintegrative Justice in Practice*, p. 13

⁹³⁷ Le Quesne, *A Constitutional History of Jersey*, p. 43

⁹³⁸ Crossan, *Poverty and Welfare*, pp. 9-12

⁹³⁹ Miles and Raynor, *Reintegrative Justice in Practice*, p. 13

⁹⁴⁰ Kelleher, 'The Triumph of the Country', pp. 28, 30 and 33

population – the former varying from two to six – while in 1804, the number of *Officiers* was set at twenty-four for St. Helier, fifteen for St. Brelade, and twelve each for the other ten parishes.⁹⁴¹ In addition, the *Loi Sur Les Assemblés Paroissiales* (1804) brought about an important change with respect to the role of the *Vingteniers* and *Officiers du Connétable*, since they were granted full powers of arrest within their respective *Vingtaines*.⁹⁴²

Foodstuffs and Provisioning

Within previous discussions of social disorder in Great Britain in the eighteenth century as a whole, the 1760s have been frequently identified as ‘the most remarkable decade of industrial disputes in the whole [period]’.⁹⁴³ Between 1763 and 1765, weavers and miners in the northern counties of England engaged respectively in periodic machine-breaking and fire-setting, while the weavers of London ‘stormed through the streets, attacking persons and property’.⁹⁴⁴ Likewise, successive poor harvests during the middle of the decade led to spiralling bread prices, with 1768 witnessing not only widespread provincial riots, but also a wave of strikes and demonstrations amongst many London trades’.⁹⁴⁵ In the Channel Islands too, the 1760s witnessed some of the most significant events of the pre-war period, with the Jersey Rebellion (1769) having served as the catalyst for the introduction of the ‘Law Code of 1771’ (see chapter one). However, the significance of that event lies not only in its political implications, but also in its serving to highlight the fact that public disorder in the

⁹⁴¹ Articles Two and Four, Act of the States of Jersey, March 31st 1804, reproduced in Le Cras, *Laws, Customs and Privileges*, pp. 286-287

⁹⁴² Miles and Raynor, *Reintegrative Justice in Practice*, p. 21

⁹⁴³ Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances*, p. 130

⁹⁴⁴ Babington, *Military Intervention*, pp. 18-19

⁹⁴⁵ Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances*, p. 85

Channel Islands – as with contemporary incidents in rural England – focused primarily on local grievances.⁹⁴⁶ Prompted by a series of failed harvests, the insurrection was fundamentally a protest against the exportation of corn supplies to Britain,⁹⁴⁷ the landowning elite being accused of having sought to artificially inflate local market prices.⁹⁴⁸

Although the Jersey Rebellion was an exceptional event within the history of the Channel Islands, it illustrated nonetheless the influence of local agricultural trends upon wider social and political affairs. Consequently, while the issue of food supply has been already addressed in relation to ensuring the health of the garrison (see chapter two), the issue may also be discussed in terms of its providing ‘insurance’ against domestic instability. Indeed, an examination of local import figures provides some indication as to why the bailiwicks remained largely untroubled by the food riots which swept Britain during 1795-96, 1800-01 and 1809-10.⁹⁴⁹ At the beginning of the Great French War, Jersey’s population exceeded 30,000⁹⁵⁰ – partly because 1791-3 had witnessed the arrival of several thousand French *émigrés* (see below) – and despite the strength of local agriculture, the economic strain was considerable.⁹⁵¹ By August 1794, Guernsey’s flour stocks were almost spent – it being said that even the most affluent families had been without bread for a fortnight⁹⁵² – and D’Auvergne was required to take under convoy a ‘fleet of victuallers’ laden with flour for the relief of the inhabitants.⁹⁵³ In addition, the Jersey Chamber of Commerce was

⁹⁴⁶ Babington, *Military Intervention*, p. 5

⁹⁴⁷ Kelleher, ‘Triumph of the Country’, pp. 15-16; and Le Hérissier, ‘Government of Jersey’, p. 30

⁹⁴⁸ McLoughlin, *The Sea was their Fortune*, p. 97

⁹⁴⁹ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, pp. 156-157; and Olson Jr., *Economics of Wartime Shortage*, p. 50

⁹⁵⁰ TNA, HO 98/3, Petition to Craig from Clement Hemery, Aaron de St. Croix and Francis Gautier, Merchants of the Island, February 21st 1793

⁹⁵¹ *The Times*, March 9th 1791

⁹⁵² SROI SA 3/1/2/3, Letter of August 18th 1794

⁹⁵³ TNA, WO 1/602, Small to Amherst, August 26th 1794

granted permission to hire 'two fast-sailing vessels' at a cost of £120 per month for the purpose of transporting regular supplies of cattle to the Islands,⁹⁵⁴ while a similar contract was negotiated for the delivery of surplus flour and grain.⁹⁵⁵

In spite of such efforts, the Channel Islands remained highly dependent upon outside economic assistance throughout the Great French War; not least as a result of the depredations inflicted on local convoys.⁹⁵⁶ Immediately after the declaration of war, seventy British ships had been detained in French ports,⁹⁵⁷ but due to their proximity to the enemy coast, the Channel Islands suffered especially heavy losses at the hands of both privateers and warships. By March 1795 alone, a total of forty-three Jersey vessels had been captured by the enemy, including a Newfoundland convoy under protection of *HMS Castor* (frigate, 32 guns). These vessels had been intercepted on May 9th 1794, during the preliminary stages of the 'Glorious First of June', and although five had been recaptured by Howe while in pursuit of Villaret-Joyeuse, the British commander had been unable to spare any men to form prize crews. Consequently, Howe had ordered for the vessels to be burned, meaning that the total losses incurred by Jersey's mercantile fleet during the first twenty-five months of the Great French War amounted to 892 men and 3,301 tons of shipping.⁹⁵⁸ In order to reduce the impact of this shortage on the inhabitants, the British government authorised the export of sheep, oxen, cattle, corn, grain, meal, flour, bread,

⁹⁵⁴ TNA HO 98/3, 'Petition to Craig from Messrs. Hemery, de St. Croix and Gautier', February 21st 1793

⁹⁵⁵ *Gazette de L'Ile de Jersey*, October 24th and November 7th 1795

⁹⁵⁶ TNA FO 95/605/87, D'Auvergne to Windham, June 27th 1797

⁹⁵⁷ Avery, 'The Naval Protection of Britain's Maritime Trade', p. 4

⁹⁵⁸ SJA, L/A/38/A1/2, Entry for March 7th 1795

biscuit and pease,⁹⁵⁹ while ‘occasional supplies of live bullocks and sheep’ were procured from sympathetic Breton-Norman merchants.⁹⁶⁰

Even with such arrangements in place, it must be remembered that the transportation of these supplies – as with those intended for the local garrisons (see chapter two) – required the support and protection of the Royal Navy, and particularly the vessels on the Channel Islands’ station. In February 1793, the merchants of Jersey had warned that ‘if there is not a supply of flour in the course of eight days there will be none in the Island’, and petitioned the Admiralty to both raise an embargo against eleven local vessels⁹⁶¹ and appoint a warship to escort them to the bailiwicks.⁹⁶² Likewise in April 1794, the abovementioned *HMS Castor* had been appointed to escort ‘ten or twelve vessels laden with flour’ from Cowes to the Channel Islands,⁹⁶³ and it appears that similar arrangements were made thereafter on an annual basis. In April 1797, for example, D’Auvergne is recorded as having acted as intermediary between the Jersey Chamber of Commerce and the Admiralty, leading to an agreement that the Island’s fishing vessels should be escorted to Spithead or Torbay, and there fall in with larger trans-Atlantic British convoys.⁹⁶⁴ Although it is unclear as to the strength of the vessel appointed to this duty, a letter of April 1799 records the *Beaver* (ship-sloop, 14 guns) having been sent from Spithead to convoy Jersey’s fishing fleet from thence to Newfoundland.⁹⁶⁵

⁹⁵⁹ TNA, HO 99/2, Portland to Gordon, January 7th 1801; and GSG, A/II/39, ‘Amendment of Two Acts of Parliament’, undated, 1803

⁹⁶⁰ TNA, HO 98/9, Gordon to Pelham, January 26th 1803

⁹⁶¹ *Harmony*, *Stag*, *Jersey Packet*, *Friendship* and *Eclipse* were bound for Jersey; *Montague*, *Agenoria*, *John Elizabeth*, *Elizabeth*, *Sark* and *Venus* were bound for Guernsey.

⁹⁶² TNA, HO 98/3, De Gruchy, Le Mesurier and Secretan to Dundas, London, February 26th 1793

⁹⁶³ TNA, HO 69/3, Stephens to D’Auvergne, April 10th 1794

⁹⁶⁴ TNA, HO 69/4, Nepean to D’Auvergne, April 8th 1797

⁹⁶⁵ TNA, HO 69/5/2, Nepean to D’Auvergne, April 10th 1799

However, in order to gain a complete picture of the stress placed upon local food supplies, it is not only necessary to take account of the French *émigré* community, but also the significant number of 'camp followers' who accompanied the expanded garrison (see chapter two).⁹⁶⁶ Although accurate records do not exist until the latter half of the Great French War, several military-style returns of the women, 'boys' and 'girls'⁹⁶⁷ were taken during Don's tenure as Lieutenant-Governor. In May 1809, for example, the Jersey garrison was recorded as being accompanied by 2,588 'followers': 1,170 women, 701 girls and 717 boys.⁹⁶⁸ As an indication of their likely impact on the Island's economy, plans for the provisioning of Fort Regent were based upon the need to supply foodstuffs for only 2,000 men,⁹⁶⁹ in spite of the militia returns for December 1809 having recorded a strength of 3,740 men.⁹⁷⁰ Once again, the Channel Islands' status as free ports can be seen as having offered a means to alleviate the strain on local resources, since it allowed merchants to circumvent the blockade instituted by the Orders in Council (1807). Moreover, since licensed wartime trade with the enemy permitted the importation of flour, meal, grain and wine from French ports in exchange for spirits and other 'luxury' products,⁹⁷¹ the Channel Islands once again avoided the effects of the poor harvests which swept much of Britain during 1810-11.⁹⁷²

Likewise, although 1812 saw the passage of an Act requesting that 2,500 quarters of flour to be imported each year from Britain to Jersey, and a supply of

⁹⁶⁶ *SJA*, A/C1/1, General Order of September 21st 1802

⁹⁶⁷ In these returns, 'Boys' and 'Girls' are listed in three sub-groups: under fives, five to ten years old, and ten to fifteen years old.

⁹⁶⁸ *SJA*, A/A5/2, Letter of May 24th 1809

⁹⁶⁹ *SJA*, A/A1/3, Letter of July 16th 1810

⁹⁷⁰ *TNA*, HO 98/15, 'Return of the Jersey Militia', undated, December 1809

⁹⁷¹ *TNA*, HO 98/15, Leighton to Ryder, February 12th 1810 and Don to Ryder, June 1st 1810

⁹⁷² Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon*, pp. 7-8

1,500 quarters of grain negotiated for the inhabitants of Guernsey,⁹⁷³ French ports continued to be exploited as a source of additional supplies. For example, the accounts of the Jersey merchant Charles Chevalier reveal that a single shipment of April 1812 brought into the Island ten tons of provisions, including ‘corn, grain, meal, flour, seeds, fruit and wine’.⁹⁷⁴ However, the ability of the Islands to bypass the Continental System did not eliminate their dependence on British sources. Mirroring the actions taken by Gordon in response to the food shortages of 1795, Don personally secured two separate imports of one thousand live sheep, as well as an allowance of twenty tons of wine at government expense.⁹⁷⁵ In addition, similar importations of livestock had previously been arranged in 1808 and 1810 – on both occasions ‘for the supply of the troops and the inhabitants in general’⁹⁷⁶ – and it was said that both groups had experienced ‘great advantage’ as a result.⁹⁷⁷ Finally, it may be observed that such legitimate imports were further supplemented by the captures made by local privateers, the Channel Islanders enjoying continual success throughout the war (see chapter six).

Religious Tension, Social Disruption – The Growth of Conscientious Objection

As highlighted by Stevenson, outbreaks of violence during the eighteenth century often resulted in Britain’s religious minorities – chiefly Catholics and Dissenters – being seized upon as convenient scapegoats.⁹⁷⁸ During the Gordon Riots, for example, Lord George Gordon and his colleagues ‘appeared

⁹⁷³ *SJA*, A/A1/6, Letter of March 3rd 1812 and *TNA*, HO 99/4, Beckett to Doyle, March 21st, 1812

⁹⁷⁴ *SJA*, A/A1/5, Letter of April 21st 1812

⁹⁷⁵ *SJA*, A/A1/6, Letters of January 31st and June 31st 1813

⁹⁷⁶ *SJA*, A/A1/1, Letter of June 10th 1808

⁹⁷⁷ *SJA*, A/A1/3, Letter of October 23rd 1810

⁹⁷⁸ Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances*, p. 36

to license the mob to attack Catholic property', while during the Priestley Riots, the half-hearted response of the magistracy 'virtually indicated to the population that the Dissenters were fair game'.⁹⁷⁹ Although no similar riots occurred in the Channel Islands, local religious tensions nonetheless ran deep: Catholicism, Calvinism, Methodism and Quakerism all being regarded as 'alien' doctrines imported by 'foreigners' (see chapter one). While the impact of anti-Catholic sentiment shall be addressed at a later point, tensions between the local Protestant denominations found considerable expression within the context of the debate over conscientious objection. At the start of the Great French War, militia service in the bailiwicks was considered obligatory for all native-born Islanders and naturalised citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation (see chapter two).⁹⁸⁰ Moreover, in common with the British yeomanry and volunteers,⁹⁸¹ the local militia were regarded as a symbol of the inhabitants' loyalty to the Crown, so the Channel Islands witnessed none of the rioting sparked by the passage of the Supplementary Militia Act (1796).⁹⁸²

Within the Channel Islands, the 'prime movers' with respect to conscientious objection were the Methodists and the Quakers: though never as numerous as in Great Britain or Canada, these embryonic communities were regarded nonetheless as a serious threat to the established social order. In 1798, for example, the Dean of Jersey accused local Dissenters of 'teaching their disciples to treat...the Church of England with a contemptuous disrespect', while Gordon decried their preaching of conscientious objection as 'a doctrine

⁹⁷⁹ Ibid, pp. 94 and 176

⁹⁸⁰ GSG, A/II/39, Entry for February 24th 1796

⁹⁸¹ DHC, 152M/C/1797/OZ/49, 'Addington and General Simcoe re. The Yeomanry Corps as a Loyal Gesture', 1797

⁹⁸² T. Bartlett, 'An End to Moral Economy: The Irish Militia Disturbances of 1793', *PP* 99:1 (1983) 59-60; Western, *The English Militia in the Eighteenth Century*, p. 301

adverse to the safety of the Island'.⁹⁸³ Moreover, the States of Jersey had sought to legalise the banishment of any man who failed to attend Sunday Drill,⁹⁸⁴ and although the measure was refused Royal Assent, the Privy Council did not wholly dismiss the sentiment behind this legislation. While the official ruling was that it was 'impossible [at this time] to approve an Act of such severity against any body of His Majesty's subjects, however misguided they may be', indication was given that 'a case of more excessive necessity and danger' might necessitate a revision of the Council's judgment.⁹⁸⁵ Similarly, although a petition on behalf of the Methodists of Guernsey and Alderney had secured their right to exemption from Sunday Drill,⁹⁸⁶ no such provision was enacted with respect to Guernsey's Quakers, who continued to face arrest and imprisonment for non-attendance at drill.⁹⁸⁷

As for conscientious objection among members of the Church of England, a 'test case' was provided by Philip Arthur, a private in the South-West Regt. of the Jersey Militia. Although declaring himself 'attached to no sect of Dissenters, but a member of the Church of England by Law Established', Arthur asserted his belief that Sunday drill was a violation of God's command to 'remember the Sabbath and keep it holy'. Moreover, he claimed that the obligation of Sunday training was not derived from any written law, but was simply a customary practice, and that any militiaman - regardless of their religious affiliation - could request to attend drill on another day of the week.⁹⁸⁸ Initially, the authorities rejected this claim, arguing that permitting the militia to exercise on weekdays

⁹⁸³ *SJA*, L/F/97/M2/47, 'Gordon and the Dissenters', 1798

⁹⁸⁴ 'Letter from the Court of St. James, December 12th, 1798, reproduced in *SJA*, L/F/22/L/32, 'Trial of Philip Arthur', 1808

⁹⁸⁵ *Ibid*, Jean de Veuille, Greffier of the States, to Gordon, undated, 1798

⁹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, Court of St. James, December 12th, 1798

⁹⁸⁷ Brock, *Against the Draft*, p. 99

⁹⁸⁸ *SJA*, L/F/22/L/32, 'Trial of Philip Arthur', 1808

would disrupt the work of Jersey's farmers, fishermen and labourers,⁹⁸⁹ and as a result, Arthur was fined and imprisoned.⁹⁹⁰ However, he lodged an appeal against his sentence, providing the Privy Council with a detailed critique of the prosecution's case, and highlighting that 'no law, act or ordinance enforcing military service on Sundays has been adduced'.⁹⁹¹ Ultimately, the Privy Council found in favour of Arthur, and as a result of the trial – which became a *cause celebre* – an Order in Council was issued to the effect that all militiamen might petition the Royal Court for a grant of exemption from Sunday drill.⁹⁹²

The *Émigré* Community – Initial Reception

While the final decade of the eighteenth century saw the *Jeannots* gain a majority in both the States and the Royal Court (see chapter one), their radical manifesto did not extend to the free exercise of religion. In contrast to the British government, which had increasingly recognised the political expediency of Catholic emancipation,⁹⁹³ the authorities in the bailiwicks continued to look upon adherents to the Roman Rite as posing a direct threat to the Anglican establishment.⁹⁹⁴ Moreover, as a result of the Channel Islands' legislative independence (see chapter one), the British government could not – as they had done with respect to Ireland – pressurise the States into adopting a local version of the relief acts passed by Westminster.⁹⁹⁵ Consequently, while the

⁹⁸⁹ Jean de Veuille, Greffier of the States, to the Privy Council, August, 16th 1809, reproduced in *Jersey Magaine and Monthly Recorder*, Vol. 5 (Jersey, 1810) 222-223

⁹⁹⁰ Proceedings of the Royal Court, September 3rd and October 4th 1808, reproduced in *Ibid*, 223

⁹⁹¹ 'Reply of Philip Arthur to the Royal Court, and Forwarded to the Privy Council', undated, September 1809, reproduced in *Ibid*, 223-226

⁹⁹² *SJA*, L/F/22/L/34, 'Printed Petition of the Men of the South-West Regt. of Militia', 1811

⁹⁹³ The Papists Act (1778) had permitted Catholics to own property, inherit land and join the army; while the Roman Catholic Relief Act (1791) had allowed Catholics to practice law, freely practice their faith, and set up schools for the children of Catholic families.

⁹⁹⁴ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 2, Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances*, p. 94

⁹⁹⁵ Bartlett, 'An End to Moral Economy', 46-47

émigrés who arrived in 1791 were ‘reasonably well received’⁹⁹⁶ it is reasonable to assume that this attitude was encouraged by the fact that the majority of these refugees were of Breton-Norman origins,⁹⁹⁷ and thus shared ancestral, economic and social ties with their hosts.⁹⁹⁸ By contrast, not only did later groups of *émigrés* originate from as far afield as Paris, Bordeaux, Poitiers and Tours,⁹⁹⁹ but D’Auvergne was bombarded by complaints that their leaders, rather than seeking to integrate into the local community,¹⁰⁰⁰ continued to behave ‘as if they were at Versailles or Fontainebleau’.¹⁰⁰¹

According to a report of February 1794, Balcarres estimated that ‘upwards of 4,000 Frenchmen, [including] about 2,300 clergy’ were then resident in the Channel Islands as a whole,¹⁰⁰² while De Beauchamp estimated that 1,200 priests and several hundred members of ‘the nobles and privileged classes’¹⁰⁰³ had settled in Jersey.¹⁰⁰⁴ Although accurate census data is unavailable before 1806 (see chapter two), it may be estimated that the total population of the Channel Islands in 1795 – exclusive of *émigrés*, but inclusive of all other ‘foreigners’ – stood at just under 43,000.¹⁰⁰⁵ At the time of Guernsey’s first census, eighty-seven percent of inhabitants were classified as ‘natives’,¹⁰⁰⁶ and assuming that this statistic was also true of 1795, this yields a ratio of one *émigré* to every nine ‘native’ islanders. Clearly, this large influx of refugees

⁹⁹⁶ Lempriere, *History*, pp. 133-134

⁹⁹⁷ They are recorded as originating chiefly from the dioceses of Bayeux, Coutances and Mans (Normandy) and Dol, Rennes, St. Brieuc, St. Malo and Treguier (Brittany)

⁹⁹⁸ Podger, *Nest of Vipers*, pp. 161-162

⁹⁹⁹ Lempriere, *History*, p. 133

¹⁰⁰⁰ K. Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution: Émigrés in London, 1789-1802* (Basingstoke, 1999) pp. 96-97; Cox, ‘The Transformation of St. Peter Port’, p. 104

¹⁰⁰¹ Kirke, *From the Gun-Room to the Throne: being the life of Vice-Admiral H.S.H. Philip D’Auvergne, Duke of Bouillon* (London, 1904) pp. 108-109

¹⁰⁰² TNA, HO 98/5, Balcarres to Dundas, February 27th 1794

¹⁰⁰³ The latter are given as originating from Brittany, Maine, Perche, Normandy, Anjou and Touraine.

¹⁰⁰⁴ De Beauchamp, *Histoire de la Guerre de la Vendée et des Chouans*, Tome I, p. 67

¹⁰⁰⁵ Cox, ‘The Transformation of St. Peter Port’, p. 52; and Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 1

¹⁰⁰⁶ Tupper, *The History of Guernsey*, p. 428

placed a serious burden on the local economy: even in February 1792, it was reported that the *émigré* presence in Guernsey had caused the price of butter to double from 7d per lb to 14d per lb.¹⁰⁰⁷ Likewise, March 1793 saw the Bishops of Bayeux, Tréguier and Dol – the leaders of the *émigré* community in Jersey – complain to Craig of ‘the great scarcity of provisions and the congruent high price of every necessary of life’.¹⁰⁰⁸

Although their availability as a scapegoat for economic problems has been often highlighted as a significant cause of the hardening attitude towards the *émigrés*,¹⁰⁰⁹ it is also necessary to take account of the controversy which surrounded Fr. Matthieu de Gruchy.¹⁰¹⁰ As King notes, the initial tolerance of the *émigré* clergy had been conditional upon their refraining from making any attempt to convert the inhabitants or otherwise challenge the authority of the Church of England.¹⁰¹¹ However, de Gruchy openly flouted this agreement, providing covert spiritual instruction to Elizabeth and Marie-Louise Gaudin and their housemaid Mary Mollet – the Gaundin sisters being received into the Catholic Church on February 19th 1794 – as well as at least fifteen other ‘native’ converts. Consequently, when a petition denouncing the *émigrés* was submitted to the *Police Honorifique*, de Gruchy’s name was ‘at the head of the list’, and his critics sought to employ the local militia laws as a means by which to force him to halt his activities.¹⁰¹² Although the local authorities had accepted that Canon Law forbade the *émigré* priests to bear arms,¹⁰¹³ it was claimed that de Gruchy

¹⁰⁰⁷ *The Times*, February 8th 1792

¹⁰⁰⁸ TNA, HO 98/3, Craig to Dundas, undated, March 1793

¹⁰⁰⁹ King, ‘The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists’, p. 6

¹⁰¹⁰ du Tressay, *Matthieu de Gruchy*, p. 53

¹⁰¹¹ King, ‘The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists’, p. 5

¹⁰¹² du Tressay, *Matthieu de Gruchy*, pp. 141-145

¹⁰¹³ TNA, HO 98/5, Balcarres to Dundas, February 27th 1794

– being both a native Jerseyman and a landowner – was still obliged to muster with the militia, and on March 6th 1794, he was summoned the Royal Court.¹⁰¹⁴

However, this stratagem ultimately failed: immediately after his trial, de Gruchy travelled to London, and having secured an audience with Conway, received an official exemption from militia service.¹⁰¹⁵ Not only did this allow de Gruchy to return to Jersey without fear of further prosecution, but it is clear that he and his associates enjoyed even greater success in spreading the Catholic faith amongst the inhabitants. So great did the number of converts become that the States of Jersey attempted to pass an Act authorising the deportation of ‘all those Catholics...who had dared to attack the principles of the Protestant Religion so happily established in this Island.’¹⁰¹⁶ Although Balcarres persuaded the States that such a move would be viewed by the Privy Council as ‘offensive and uncandid’, he reported that ‘even the moderate members...are inclined to think that the residence of such a large body [of Catholics] in so small an Island is a great oppression upon the people’.¹⁰¹⁷ With respect to de Gruchy, the matter was finally resolved as a result of the conversion of Elisabeth and Susan Pinel, their brother Thomas being summoned before the Royal Court in March 1795.¹⁰¹⁸ Although not identified as one of the priests responsible for instructing the Pinels, it was understood that the prosecution was ‘principally directed against de Gruchy’, and the *émigré* leaders took the decision to send him to Southampton as Chaplain to the Irish troops stationed there.¹⁰¹⁹

¹⁰¹⁴ du Tressay, *Matthieu de Gruchy*, pp. 145-147

¹⁰¹⁵ Bishop of Tréguier to Fr. De Gruchy, May 15th 1794, reproduced in *Ibid*, p. 151

¹⁰¹⁶ ‘Proposed Act of the States of Jersey’, Undated, 1794, reproduced in *Ibid*, pp. 166-167

¹⁰¹⁷ TNA, HO 98/5, Balcarres to Dundas, February 27th 1794

¹⁰¹⁸ *Gazette de L’Ile de Jersey*, March 24th 1795

¹⁰¹⁹ du Tressay, *Matthieu de Gruchy*, p. 168-169

Official Treatment and Public Perception of the *Émigrés*

Despite the tensions which characterised much of the 1790s, reports of the excesses of the Revolution finally encouraged a more compassionate attitude to the plight of the *émigrés*; a shift which was evidenced by the creation of both government and publicly-funded relief programmes.¹⁰²⁰ More elaborate schemes were also proposed: in late 1792, the Comte de Botherel solicited Jersey's merchants to fund the creation of an *émigré* colony in Canada,¹⁰²¹ and in 1798, the Comte de Puisaye sailed from England with forty-one men, an appeal being launched for additional 'Gentleman Volunteers'.¹⁰²² In exchange for seven years' labour and military service, these men would receive 'English pay and allowances', as well as a land grant of 200 acres after completion of their service.¹⁰²³ Despite of the success of such schemes, the majority of *émigrés* appear to have become firmly established within the Channel Islands, since even when the threat of invasion was at its height, relatively few took the decision to relocate to 'safer' communities in Great Britain. During the crisis of 1793 (see chapter three), only 500 *émigrés* complied with an order to 'quit' the bailiwicks,¹⁰²⁴ while during the invasion scare of 1796-7, only 350 of the lay *émigrés* in the Channel Islands relocated to England, in this case joining the large number of their fellow countrymen residing in London.¹⁰²⁵

¹⁰²⁰ N. Aston, 'Burke, Boisgelin and Politics of the *Émigré* Bishops' in K. Carpenter, and P. Mansel, (eds.), *French Émigrés in Europe and the Struggle against Revolution, 1789-1814* (Basingstoke, 1999) p. 197; and A. Bellenger, '“Fearless Resting Place”: The Exiled French Clergy in Great Britain, 1789-1815' in *Ibid*, p. 214

¹⁰²¹ *Gazette de L'Ile de Jersey*, October 31st 1792

¹⁰²² Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 555

¹⁰²³ TNA, HO 69/2/11, Woodford to D'Auvergne, May 3rd 1799

¹⁰²⁴ *The Times*, February 18th and March 30th 1793

¹⁰²⁵ Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution*, p. 97

In contrast to the attitude of the general inhabitants, the official policy towards the *émigrés* appears to have remained fairly constant throughout the war: rather than bearing any open hostility, the Islands' civil authorities accepted their presence as a 'necessary evil'. While the States remained officially responsible for ensuring the welfare of the refugee population in their respective bailiwicks, this duty eventually devolved upon D'Auvergne, in spite of his being already swamped by his responsibilities towards the Admiralty and the War Office.¹⁰²⁶ Although his work with the *émigré* community frequently concerned matters of espionage and covert warfare (see chapters eight and nine), it must be emphasised that D'Auvergne's primary responsibility in this area concerned the management and distribution of relief.¹⁰²⁷ Between February 1794 and January 1810, the *émigrés* residing in Britain received over £2,952,746 in government assistance, distributed under the auspices of the Home Office,¹⁰²⁸ while in the Channel Islands, a similar role was performed by the *Comité de Secours de Jersey*. According to D'Auvergne's records, this organisation oversaw the distribution of £122,031 in aid between 1794 and 1801 – 126,000 individual payments being made to approximately 1,500 individuals¹⁰²⁹ – but steps were also taken to secure the cooperation of *émigré* leaders, permission being given for them to set up schools¹⁰³⁰ and healthcare provisions.¹⁰³¹

Overall, the reluctance of the authorities to intervene directly in the affairs of the *émigré* community was demonstrated by the legal response to their increasing visibility in the Channel Islands. As has been mentioned, neither States

¹⁰²⁶ Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and British Maritime Strategy', p. 224

¹⁰²⁷ PC 1/121, D'Auvergne to the Exchequer, June 10th 1802

¹⁰²⁸ Ashelford, *In the English Service*, pp. 78-79

¹⁰²⁹ PC 1/121, D'Auvergne to the Exchequer, June 10th 1802

¹⁰³⁰ Ashelford, *In the English Service*, p. 81; and Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution*, pp. 98-99

¹⁰³¹ SJA, A/A2/1, Letter from Jersey, September 31st, 1811

Assembly had given any thought to the introduction of a local equivalent to the Papists Act (1778) or the Roman Catholic Relief Act (1791), although some concessions were eventually granted to the Catholic community. However, while these measures included allowing the *émigré* clergy to minister to their own countrymen, they had little effect in dispelling public suspicions concerning the intentions of the *émigrés* in general.¹⁰³² Moreover, the compromise and accommodation offered by the States proved little more than a ‘false front’: the *minutiae* of the concessions ensured that persecution continued unabated, particularly amongst the Islands’ Anglican elite. For example, while it was now legal in Britain to attend Catholic sacraments and convert to the Roman Church, ‘native’ Channel Islanders were forbidden to do so, and were likewise forbidden to marry Catholics without first obtaining the permission of the Lieutenant-Governor.¹⁰³³ According to the aforementioned report, anti-Catholic prejudices were supported by the majority of States’ Members: Balcarras observing that they ‘represented the *émigrés*’ transgressions in such glaring colours and with such assiduity as to produce universal hatred against them’.¹⁰³⁴

The nature of anti-Catholic prejudices in the Channel Islands can be best demonstrated through a brief reference to the treatment of the *émigrés* in the local press, and especially the pro-*Jeannot* journal *Gazette de L’Ile de Jersey*. Reflecting the pro-Revolutionary views of its political sponsors,¹⁰³⁵ the pre-war years had witnessed the publication of several articles hostile to the French royalists and the Catholic Church,¹⁰³⁶ and despite being obliged to issue a

¹⁰³² TNA, PC 1/117B, D’Auvergne to Dundas, December [unknown] 1795

¹⁰³³ TNA HO 69/9/2, Le Couteur to D’Auvergne, October 9th 1796

¹⁰³⁴ TNA, HO 98/5, Balcarras to Dundas, February 27th 1794

¹⁰³⁵ *Gazette de L’Ile de Jersey*, March 21st and July 11th 1789, and January 2nd 1790

¹⁰³⁶ *Gazette de L’Ile de Jersey*, March 27th 1790 and April 3rd 1790

retraction,¹⁰³⁷ the editors made little effort to moderate their rhetoric. As late as April 1791, a pair of articles had appeared in *La Gazette* praising France as ‘the pride of all the peoples of the world’, and denouncing the British press for ‘attacking the most free and generous nation in the world’.¹⁰³⁸ Although no outcry occurred on this occasion, such rhetoric – as with that aimed at *émigrés* settling in Somerstown and Saint George’s Fields¹⁰³⁹ – created a hostile environment for the refugees, and potentially jeopardised the British government’s attempt to maintain neutral towards the Republic.¹⁰⁴⁰ Certainly, fears of violence between Islanders and *émigrés* were justified: in June 1791, it was reported that several French refugees in Jersey had been ‘roughly handled’ by the inhabitants after being discovered celebrating Mass, and it was rumoured that a number had been injured or killed.¹⁰⁴¹

A more serious antagonisation of relations between the *émigrés* and the inhabitants occurred in Jersey during September 1792, when rumours emerged of a plot by a number of royalists to use the island as a base from which to support an invasion of Brittany. Following an comprehensive search, several thousand muskets, six barrels of ammunition, four field guns and a supply of cartridges were seized on the orders of the Lieutenant-Governor and placed in the arsenal at Elizabeth Castle.¹⁰⁴² That the discovery of this plot ‘gave fresh bitterness to the growing hatred of the French’¹⁰⁴³ is evidenced by Dundas’ declaration that ‘the situation of the *émigrés* in general becomes more and more embarrassing’, and the fact that Falle was empowered ‘to punish...in the most

¹⁰³⁷ *Gazette de L’Ile de Jersey*, April 10th 1790

¹⁰³⁸ *Gazette de L’Ile de Jersey*, April 9th 1791

¹⁰³⁹ Carpenter, *Refugees of the French Revolution*, p. 96

¹⁰⁴⁰ TNA, HO 98/41, Peter Le Mesurier to Dundas, June 11th, 1792; and King, ‘The British Government, *Émigrés* and Royalists’, pp. 9 and 11

¹⁰⁴¹ *The Times*, June 25th 1791

¹⁰⁴² King, ‘The British Government, *Émigrés* and Royalists’, pp. 8-9

¹⁰⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 11

exemplary manner' any acts of violence against them.¹⁰⁴⁴ Indeed, a spate of crimes against the *émigrés* had been reported in the country parishes, with several having been 'grossly insulted and severely beaten', and a number of inhabitants having declared their intent 'on the first signal of alarm, [to] secure all the *émigrés* and confine them in the Churches'. Most serious from the perspective of local defence, a number of militiamen openly denounced 'all Frenchmen as alike, and equally suspected' and were reported as having '[refused] to mount guard...whilst they have an 'enemy' in the interior'.¹⁰⁴⁵

Suspicious of a 'Fifth Column'

During the 1780s and early 1790s, the emergence of groups such as the Society for Constitutional Information and the London Corresponding Society had become a serious concern for the British government.¹⁰⁴⁶ In 1793, the Alien Office was established: its remit being to investigate domestic security threats, conduct clandestine intelligence operations, and – insofar as was necessary – engage in continental espionage.¹⁰⁴⁷ According to Stevenson, the atmosphere in London had, by this time, become 'one of near panic', with reform campaigners being almost universally dismissed as 'Jacobins' and treated as 'objects of suspicion, persecution and outright attack'.¹⁰⁴⁸ Moreover, the growing number of *émigrés* in the City sparked fears that 'an army of Jacobins...was plotting with home-grown radicals',¹⁰⁴⁹ prompting the government to pass the *Habeas Corpus* Suspension Act (1794), Seditious Meetings Act (1795) and the

¹⁰⁴⁴ TNA, HO 98/3, Dundas to Falle, March 12th 1793

¹⁰⁴⁵ Ibid, Falle to Dundas, January 16th 1793

¹⁰⁴⁶ Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People*, p. 92

¹⁰⁴⁷ H.J. Davies, 'British Intelligence in the Peninsular War' PhD Thesis, (Exeter, 2006) p. 4

¹⁰⁴⁸ Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances*, p. 177

¹⁰⁴⁹ Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People*, p. 62

Treason Act (1795).¹⁰⁵⁰ Although the French government later permitted passports to be issued to individuals who agreed to 'leave France and go live under a foreign government',¹⁰⁵¹ many such persons came under suspicion of being engaged in espionage. In 1809, an *émigré* was confined to Elizabeth Castle under 'double sentries', and four others were arrested by the *Connétable* of St. Helier,¹⁰⁵² while in 1813, Don reported the presence of a priest 'strongly suspected to be in the pay of Bonaparte'.¹⁰⁵³

Throughout the Great French War, local fifth columnist activity – real or imagined – remained a significant security issue: in early 1797, for example, it was found that 'many anonymous and incendiary writings...animating sedition and revolt...after the example of the French' had been published in Jersey'. Having concluded that current laws 'do not suffice to prevent, suppress and punish effectively so dangerous a society' the States took immediate steps to pass 'an Act designed to counteract tumultuous and riotous assembly'.¹⁰⁵⁴ Likewise in 1803, while the majority of Islanders were described by Gordon as being 'attached to His Majesty's sacred person and government', the Lieutenant-Governor warned against the activities of 'a few persons of the lowest class' who he suspected of being 'perverted to French principles'.¹⁰⁵⁵ As a result of such suspicions, repeated attempts were made to control the movement of 'foreigners': in December 1800, for example, the *Connétables* were instructed to

¹⁰⁵⁰ Harling, 'A Tale of Two Conflicts', p. 24

¹⁰⁵¹ AN, AF III, 338, Dossier 1472, 'Secret Instructions issued to Hoche', December 28th 1795

¹⁰⁵² SJA, A/A5/2, Letters of January 10th 1809 and September 27th 1809

¹⁰⁵³ SJA, L/F/95/B/36, 'Don to Doyle Concerning an Attempt to Rescue Monsieur de la Haye, and Suspicions Concerning a Priest is Believed to be in the Pay of Bonaparte', September. 30th 1813

¹⁰⁵⁴ SJA, L/F/22/B/7, 'Printed Acts of the States and Orders in Council Relating to Tumultuous Assemblies Etc.' 1797

¹⁰⁵⁵ TNA, HO 98/9, Gordon to Pelham, June 12th 1803

set up parochial registers¹⁰⁵⁶ of all ‘foreigners’, including ‘Englishmen, lay *émigrés*, priests, and women and children of ‘foreign’ origin.¹⁰⁵⁷ Similarly, a declaration of January 1802 ordered the repatriation of all Frenchmen who had arrived in the Islands since the signing of the ‘preliminary peace’,¹⁰⁵⁸ though an exemption was made available to those French citizens or *émigrés* ‘known to maintain commercial businesses in St. Aubin or St. Helier’.¹⁰⁵⁹

It must be acknowledged, however, that such orders did little more than enforce restrictions which had been in place against foreigners in the Channel Islands since at least the early seventeenth century¹⁰⁶⁰ and re-affirmed under the *Code de Loi de 1771*. As has been already noted, no ‘foreigner’ could take up residence in the Island or marry a ‘native’ without the permission of the Lieutenant-Governor (see chapter one), but a ‘native’ woman who married a ‘foreigner’ illegally also risked the loss of her dowry.¹⁰⁶¹ Such precedents enabled the local authorities – at least during the Peace of Amiens – to rid themselves of a minority which was considered both undesirable and a risk to local social stability. Since they had failed – allegedly – to report themselves to the Lieutenant-Governor before seeking lodgings or employment, the more recently-arrived *émigrés* could be simply rounded up by the *Police Honorifique* and repatriated. Furthermore, any inhabitants who had given shelter or aid to these illegal aliens without first advising the authorities were likewise ordered to

¹⁰⁵⁶ It is possible that this was not intended as an exclusively anti-espionage measure: the registration of women and children would indicate that it was used to facilitate the more effective distribution of relief.

¹⁰⁵⁷ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, ‘Circular from Le Couteur to the *Connétables*’, December 16th 1800

¹⁰⁵⁸ The Treaty of Amiens was officially signed on March 25th 1802, but the ‘preliminary peace’ had been signed in London on September 30th 1801

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid, ‘Le Couteur to the *Connétables*’, January 28th 1802 and ‘Le Couteur to the *Connétable* of St. Brelade’, February 7th 1802

¹⁰⁶⁰ TNA, HO 98/3, Regulations Respecting Foreigners, Enclosed in Nepean to Falle, January 20th 1793

¹⁰⁶¹ Le Cras, *Guide to the Island of Jersey*, pp. 13 and 135

appear before the Royal Court for their failure to comply with 'that part of the law, the strict observance of which is crucial to the security of this Island'.¹⁰⁶²

Suspected Enemy Spies and their Accomplices

Even after the *émigré* community was firmly established in the Channel Islands, suspicions lingered that a proportion of them might be spies in the service of the French Republic or might prove to be otherwise sympathetic to the enemy in the event of an invasion. According to intelligence received from D'Auvergne in August 1796, the French authorities were actively seeking to encourage the *émigrés* to act as a fifth column, offering a 'reintegration of civil rights' to any such persons as would willingly join an invading army.¹⁰⁶³ Likewise, there is ample evidence to suggest that the pro-Revolutionary sentiments expressed by readers of *La Gazette* in December 1792 – when they had offered to act as bodyguards for French republicans arriving in Jersey¹⁰⁶⁴ – were not quashed by the outbreak of war. Indeed, a report of 1800 revealed that 'a kind of Jacobin Club' had been established in St. Peter Port, and that the meetings were being attended by not only *émigrés*, but also members of the Russian units then temporarily stationed in the Channel Islands (see below).¹⁰⁶⁵ While it is impossible to gauge the extent or nature of local Radicalism, they almost certainly would have adopted a position similar to those London Radicals who defended the Jacobins as 'enlightened friends of liberty [who had been] provoked into violence by the supporters of tyranny'.¹⁰⁶⁶

¹⁰⁶² SJA, L/C/68/A/1, 'Circular from Le Couteur to the *Connétables*', January 28th 1802

¹⁰⁶³ TNA, PC 1/117B, D'Auvergne to Dundas, August 29th 1796

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Gazette de L'Ile de Jersey*, December 22nd 1792

¹⁰⁶⁵ TNA, WO 1/419, Eton to Huskisson and Count Wormzow, February 25th 1800

¹⁰⁶⁶ Harling, 'A Tale of Two Conflicts', p. 22

As might be expected, open suspicion towards French citizens flared up once more with the outbreak of the Napoleonic War, this time encouraged by three key events in Napoleon's early years as First Consul. Of primary importance was his decision to grant the *émigrés* a partial amnesty: a move which, in late 1800, had led to the legal repatriation of around 52,000 men, women and children.¹⁰⁶⁷ Second, the *Concordat* with Pope Pius VII – signed in 1801 – had recognised Roman Catholicism as the *de facto* religion of the majority of the French population and, together with the General Amnesty of April 26th 1802, had left all but 1,000 of the most extreme *émigrés* at liberty to return from exile. Unsurprisingly, many of the *émigrés* who had established themselves in Britain and the Channel Islands during the 1790s accepted Napoleon's terms: of the 5,621 *émigrés* receiving assistance from the British government in 1800, only 800 remained by the end of 1802.¹⁰⁶⁸ However, given that those *émigrés* who chose to take advantage of the amnesty were potentially returning to France with a detailed knowledge of the geography and defences of the Channel Islands, the authorities were desirous to guard against the possibility that Napoleon might seek to secure their services as spies.

Consequently, the renewal of hostilities in May 1803 led to a number of new restrictions being placed upon the movements of French citizens then resident in the Islands. In general, these new regulations mirrored policies enacted by Napoleon towards British diplomats and other government officials,¹⁰⁶⁹ and included measures such as the introduction of identity cards, the impounding of

¹⁰⁶⁷ J.N. Heuer, 'Family Bonds and Female Citizenship: Émigré Women under the Directory' in H.G. Howard and J.A. Miller (eds.), *Taking Liberties: Problems of a New Order from the French Revolution to Napoleon* (Manchester, 2002) p. 66

¹⁰⁶⁸ Bellenger, 'Fearless Resting Place', p. 215

¹⁰⁶⁹ E. Sparrow, *Secret Service: British Agents in France, 1792-1815* (Woodbridge, 1999) pp. 269-270

French boats and the arrest of French seamen.¹⁰⁷⁰ However, while the coastal patrols were instructed ‘not to interfere with legal trade carried on by any vessel [or] confine or make prisoners of any person unless [there is] just cause to consider him a spy’,¹⁰⁷¹ several other orders indicate a ‘McCarthyist’ stance on the part of the authorities.¹⁰⁷² For instance, any French citizen returning to the Island following deportation, or failing to produce an identity card, was to be interrogated,¹⁰⁷³ and no *émigré* – even those of native origin – was to be permitted to enlist in the Militia.¹⁰⁷⁴ Finally, it should be noted that several local officials were placed under suspicion of aiding and abetting enemy agents: in December 1803, for example, the *Connétable* of St. Saviour was brought before the Royal Court on a charge of having given quarter to a *corsair*.¹⁰⁷⁵

With respect to *La Correspondence*, although this organisation shall be treated to far greater examination with respect to the matter of espionage (see chapter nine), it should be noted that several events connected with its operation served to validate the suspicions of the local authorities towards the *émigrés*.¹⁰⁷⁶ Most notable among these is the mass compromising of D’Auvergne’s network in 1808, following the capture of Prigent and Bouchard, since it appeared to reveal that at least some of the most trusted *émigrés* valued their own lives more highly than the royalist cause.¹⁰⁷⁷ However, while Balleine argues that there is ‘no doubt’ that both men revealed everything they knew of *La Correspondence*, and put up only minimal resistance to their captors,¹⁰⁷⁸ Hutt asserts that there is

¹⁰⁷⁰ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, ‘Circulars from Le Couteur to the *Connétables*’, May 18th and 25th 1803

¹⁰⁷¹ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of January 14th 1807

¹⁰⁷² SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of August 25th 1808

¹⁰⁷³ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, ‘Circular from Le Couteur to the *Connétables*’, November 11th 1803

¹⁰⁷⁴ Ibid, Le Couteur to Colonel Mauger, December 20th 1803

¹⁰⁷⁵ Ibid, Le Couteur to the *Connétable* of St. Saviour, December 27th 1803

¹⁰⁷⁶ Hutt, *Chouannerie and the Counter-Revolution*, Vol. II, pp. 468-469

¹⁰⁷⁷ Guerrin, ‘L’Arrestation de Prigent’, 311-331

¹⁰⁷⁸ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D’Auvergne*, pp. 115-116

little, if any, contemporary evidence to suggest that Prigent actively sought to betray his colleagues.¹⁰⁷⁹ Even so, it is evident that the *émigrés* who worked with *La Correspondence* were by no means free of suspicion: following the Peace of Amiens, those who sought to remain in Jersey were granted exemption from deportation only after D'Auvergne had provided them with written references to the Lieutenant-Governor.¹⁰⁸⁰

What should be emphasised, however, is that the years after 1797 saw a hardening of the attitude towards *all* non-native residents of the island, irrespective of their nationality or place of origin, two 'case studies' being provided by Le Couteur. The first incident, which occurred in 1799, saw two Swedish refugees arrive in St. Helier: although they claimed to have been shipwrecked off Guernsey, the fact that they had been allowed to remain 'at large' without being reported to the Lieutenant-Governor led to their being arrested as potential spies.¹⁰⁸¹ That same day, the boat in which they had arrived was impounded, the Swedes were returned to Guernsey under armed guard for interrogation, and the local man who had given them shelter was summoned before the Royal Court to face trial.¹⁰⁸² The second incident, which occurred in the aftermath of the formation of the Second League of Armed Neutrality,¹⁰⁸³ concerned the obligatory registration and inspection of all Swedish and Danish vessels entering Channel Islands' ports. Although the bailiwicks' free port status left them open to vessels belonging to members of the League, the local authorities continued to treat the incoming traders as a

¹⁰⁷⁹ Hutt, *Chouannerie and the Counter-Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 453

¹⁰⁸⁰ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to D'Auvergne, May 23rd 1803

¹⁰⁸¹ Ibid, Le Couteur to *Connétable* D'Auvergne of St. Ouen, December 28th 1799

¹⁰⁸² Ibid, Le Couteur to Sir Thomas Saumarez, December 28th 1799

¹⁰⁸³ J. Davey, *The Transformation of British Naval Strategy: Seapower and Supply in Northern Europe, 1808-12* (Woodbridge, 2012) p. 27; Olson Jr., *Economics of Wartime Shortage*, p. 52

potential security risk; the Swedish vessels *Intrepid* (6 men, 80 tons), *Axmax* (7 men, 164 tons) and *Victoria* (14 men, 200 tons) all having been found to be carrying French property.¹⁰⁸⁴

Clashes of Culture: The Case of the Russian Soldiers

In addition to the security risks which the Channel Islands faced as a result of the permeability of the maritime border, their fiercely-guarded independence also served as the direct cause of their being caught up in the aftermath of the disastrous Anglo-Russian invasion of the Batavian Republic.¹⁰⁸⁵ A total of 17,593 men had been sent by Tsar Paul I to participate in the failed Helder Expedition,¹⁰⁸⁶ and the survivors had been unable to sail for home before the onset of winter and the closing of the Baltic ports, leaving the British with a serious problem. In light of the 1798 Rebellion, a proposal to allow the Russians to overwinter in Ireland was rejected by the Lord Lieutenant, Marquess Cornwallis, and the Mutiny Act (1689) forbade the landing of foreign troops in Britain unless they were in British pay. However, since the Channel Islands were not bound by the provisions of the above Act (see chapter one), the most obvious and convenient solution – from the British perspective – was to allow the Russians to overwinter in the bailiwicks.¹⁰⁸⁷ Consequently, the local authorities were forced to contend with a variety of security issues arising from the presence of several thousand additional aliens, one muster role¹⁰⁸⁸ having

¹⁰⁸⁴ *SJA*, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to the Swedish and Danish Consuls, January 20th 1801

¹⁰⁸⁵ The Batavian Republic (1795-1806) was a client state of both the French Republic and French Empire. It was the successor of the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands.

¹⁰⁸⁶ J. Grant, *British Battles on Land and Sea*, 3 Vols. (London, 1873) Vol. II, p. 278

¹⁰⁸⁷ J. Stevens, 'Further Light on the Russians in Jersey', *ABSJ* 19:4 (1968) 328 and C. Tucker, 'The Russians in the Channel Islands, 1799-1800', *ABSJ* 21:2 (1974) 263

¹⁰⁸⁸ *TNA*, WO 1/419, 'Abstract of the Muster Rolls of Russian Troops in Jersey and Guernsey', undated

recorded a total of 6,714 Russians in Jersey¹⁰⁸⁹ and 6,403 in Guernsey,¹⁰⁹⁰ with 837 men still expected to arrive.¹⁰⁹¹

According to Tucker, 'considering the number of men involved and the haste with which their needs had to be met, the sojourn of the Russians went remarkably well',¹⁰⁹² but the presence of such a large number of foreign troops presented a number of significant challenges. Accommodation was especially problematic, since while it was hoped that the General Hospital and a system of 'disposable barracks' might prove sufficient,¹⁰⁹³ it was also suggested that the withdrawal of the Loyal Irish Fencibles might 'make an opening for six or seven hundred men'.¹⁰⁹⁴ As Gordon observed, not only would such a measure have led to 'a considerable diminution of the strength of the British force', but the uncertain steadiness and unfamiliarity of the Russian troops led him to conclude that 'the defence of the Channel Islands cannot with safety be entrusted to [their] discharge'.¹⁰⁹⁵ Furthermore, while a vote of thanks passed by the States of Jersey praised the 'uncommon good behaviour'¹⁰⁹⁶ by which the Russian troops had 'obtained the unanimous suffrage of the approbation of the Islanders',¹⁰⁹⁷ it is evident that this glowing testimony was little more than an attempt to preserve good relations with the Tsar. As Stevens observes, 'one can hardly imagine how such a small community managed to absorb such

¹⁰⁸⁹ 240 Officers; 5505 Combatants; 783 Non-Combatants; 56 Private Servants and 130 Non-Effectives

¹⁰⁹⁰ 215 Officers; 5309 Combatants; 765 Non-Combatants; 26 Private Servants and 88 Non-Effectives

¹⁰⁹¹ 19 Officers and 403 Men destined for Jersey, and 20 Officers and 395 Men destined for Guernsey

¹⁰⁹² Tucker, 'The Russians', 259

¹⁰⁹³ TNA, WO 44/79, Gordon to Huskisson, December 17th 1799

¹⁰⁹⁴ Ibid, 'Report Regarding Accommodation for Russian Troops in Jersey', December 26th 1799

¹⁰⁹⁵ Ibid, Gordon to Huskisson, December 17th 1799

¹⁰⁹⁶ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, 'Vote of Thanks Concerning the Russian Forces in Jersey', 1800

¹⁰⁹⁷ *The Times*, July 17th 1800

numbers [of foreign troops]’,¹⁰⁹⁸ and ample evidence can be found to show that the Russian presence caused consternation amongst many of the inhabitants.

First and foremost, a medical examination found a significant proportion of the Russians to be afflicted by an ‘alarming and evil prospect [which] necessitated the performance of quarantine’,¹⁰⁹⁹ a measure which would have exacerbated the abovementioned problem of food provision.¹¹⁰⁰ Moreover, it was reported that the Russians billeted in Grouville caused much disorder,¹¹⁰¹ many of the men being so starved and desperate that they resorted to stealing food from the inhabitants – particularly on market days – and were seen to eat candles, soap and lamp oil’.¹¹⁰² As to low-level friction with the inhabitants, this was largely the result of a ‘clash of cultures’: in May 1800, for example, many local women described their ‘shock’ at seeing the Russians ‘running naked about the countryside’, and it was ordered that guards should thereafter be posted to supervise their bathing.¹¹⁰³ It is likewise evident that the Islanders were both fascinated and terrified by the appearance of the Cossacks, the elite Russian cavalry whose ‘very tall and formidable [physique]’ was enhanced by a dashing uniform, which was hung about with a fierce array of weapons.¹¹⁰⁴ However, in cases where the Russians were suspected of having committed criminal offences against the Islanders,¹¹⁰⁵ the ‘clash of cultures’ model provides

¹⁰⁹⁸ Stevens, ‘Further Light on the Russians’, 329

¹⁰⁹⁹ TNA WO 44/79, Dr. Jackson to Dalrymple, December 19th 1799

¹¹⁰⁰ The daily hospital ration was: 1.5 lbs of bread; 5 ozs. vegetables; 4 ozs. grain; 0.75 ozs of salt; 1 gill spirits; and 1 gill vinegar (See Ibid, Recommendations from Dr. Johnson, January 1st 1800)

¹¹⁰¹ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to Mr. L’Abbe, December 22nd 1799, and Le Couteur to Lieutenant Warhoff, December 23rd 1799

¹¹⁰² Stevens, ‘Further Light on the Russians’, 329

¹¹⁰³ TNA, WO 1/419, Eton to Huskisson, Jersey, May 12th 1800

¹¹⁰⁴ *The Times*, December 10th 1799

¹¹⁰⁵ TNA, WO 44/79, Eton to Dundas, Jersey, February 14th 1800

insufficient explanation, and the violent encounters which so often followed such incidents represented a directly threat to British relations with the Tsar.¹¹⁰⁶

Perhaps the most serious incident involving the Russian troops occurred in December 1799, when two Russian soldiers were accused of having raped a young woman in St. Peter Port, and a third was suspected of carrying out a second attack.¹¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, even in cases of capital offences, the Russian officers refused to accept that their troops were answerable to any authority other than Russian military law,¹¹⁰⁸ and refused to comply with any order – even those given by their commanding officers – to surrender the accused to the civil authorities.¹¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Colonel Durnovo was described as having treated the incident ‘in a jocose manner [and] as a mere bagatelle’,¹¹¹⁰ and although the alleged rapists were ultimately compelled to answer before the civil powers, it was feared that failure to secure a conviction would spark a riot. Moreover, the danger was exacerbated by the inhabitants’ militia training, Eton having advised that ‘the people – if they do not see such an outrage punished – are well-armed, [and liable] to take revenge on every Russian they find straggling out of the district of their cantonment’.¹¹¹¹ Fortunately for Anglo-Russian relations, the trial dragged on until the reopening of the Baltic in June 1800, by which time ‘the subsequent behaviour of the whole Russian corps’ had caused the inhabitants to adopt ‘the strongest predilection in their favour’, and it was decided to ‘leave it to the Russians themselves to punish or take no notice of the crime’.¹¹¹²

¹¹⁰⁶ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to the *Procureur*, February 23rd 1800

¹¹⁰⁷ TNA, WO 44/79, Eton to Dundas, December 29th and 31st 1799

¹¹⁰⁸ Ibid, Eton to Anon, December 29th 1799 and Eton to Gordon, February 13th 1800

¹¹⁰⁹ TNA, HO 99/2, Portland to Dalrymple, January 10th 1800

¹¹¹⁰ Ibid, Eton to Dalrymple, January 5th 1800

¹¹¹¹ Ibid, Eton to Dundas, December 29th 1799

¹¹¹² TNA, WO 1/419, Eton to Dundas, June 11th 1800

Relations between the Garrison and the Civilian Population

Although the matter of 'internal' discipline had been already discussed in relation to their reliability as a defensive force, it is necessary to provide a more detailed examination of the public response to disruptive and criminal behaviour amongst the garrison. With respect to desertion, it appears that the inhabitants were often sympathetic towards individual offenders, offering them sanctuary, aiding their escape, and occasionally engaging in violent altercations with the civil and military authorities.¹¹¹³ In 1811, for example, a deserter from the 26th Regt. was reported as having been given shelter at the Half Moon Inn, Trinity, and the proprietor was subsequently brought before the Royal Court for having aided and abetted his 'rescue'.¹¹¹⁴ Similarly, James Le Fait of Gorey was prosecuted in 1812, both for concealing a deserter from the 2nd/96th Regt. and for having engaging other inhabitants in an attempt to 'forcibly prevent his arrest' by the *Police Honorifique*.¹¹¹⁵ Likewise in Guernsey, it was reported that two deserters from the *Racehorse* were 'rescued' from the custody of the *Connétables* of St. Peter Port in July 1808, although in this case, the subsequent investigation found that the men in question had been illegally impressed¹¹¹⁶ from a local fishing vessel (see chapter two).¹¹¹⁷

As the Channel Islands were assumed to present potential deserters with fewer opportunities for escape than either 'mainland' ports or garrison towns, it is natural that the British government should have viewed it as an ideal post for

¹¹¹³ Ibid, Le Couteur to the *Procureur*, February 23rd 1801

¹¹¹⁴ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of February 21st 1811

¹¹¹⁵ SJA, A/A1/5, Letter of March 4th 1812

¹¹¹⁶ Although the Channel Islanders were *constitutionally* protected from impressment, fishermen coasters, colliers and whalers – regardless of their place of birth – were accorded similar protection. See J. Dancy, 'British Naval Administration and Lower Deck Manpower' in Rodger, Dancy, Darnell and Wilson (eds.), *Strategy and the Sea*, p. 54

¹¹¹⁷ GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letters of July 18th 1808

the Royal African Corps, one of its penal regiments.¹¹¹⁸ Although responsible for a wave of burglaries,¹¹¹⁹ the most notorious crime connected to this corps was the murder of Olympe Mahy, a seventy-four year-old mother of ten, by Private Robert Wilson, alias Wood, in 1808.¹¹²⁰ Described by the local press as a 'monster' who had 'committed several other crimes in England',¹¹²¹ later accounts also describe how he had plotted to escape custody by killing the priest sent to visit him and switching places with the victim.¹¹²² However, capital crimes were by no means limited to the penal corps: several are recorded as having been committed by members of the garrison regiments, with no distinction as to rank. In late 1794, a corporal of the 32nd Regt. of Foot was imprisoned in Elizabeth Castle to await execution for murder,¹¹²³ while in 1809, an unnamed soldier who had raped a local woman was flogged by the 'common executioner'.¹¹²⁴ In addition, it appears¹¹²⁵ that George Weston, Paymaster of the 2nd/96th Regt. of Foot, was court-martialled for the rape of a fellow soldier,¹¹²⁶ while in Guernsey, Lieutenant Greenwell and Ensign Jackson brought charges of assault against two of their fellow officers.¹¹²⁷

As well as the conduct of the British troops, it is necessary to carry out a brief examination of the problems which arose in Jersey as a result of the presence of several regiments of Dutch soldiers, these having been stationed in the island

¹¹¹⁸ The Royal African Corps (later the Royal York Rangers) was sent to Guernsey in 1807

¹¹¹⁹ *GSG*, A/IV/80/16, Letter of September 26th 1807

¹¹²⁰ Anon., 'An Ancient Murder, May 15th 1808', <http://www.priaulxlibrary.co.uk/articles/article/ancient-murder-15-may-1808>, accessed August 21st 2017

¹¹²¹ *Gazette de L'Isle de Guernesey*, June 4th 1808

¹¹²² According to 'An Ancient Murder', Wilson confessed this plan on the scaffold while in conversation with Rev. William J. Chepmell, and the details were later communicated to Amias C. Andros by Chepmell's daughter, Mrs. La Serre.

¹¹²³ *TNA*, WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, Undated

¹¹²⁴ *The Jersey Magazine and Monthly Recorder*, Vol. 1 (Jersey, 1809) p. 336

¹¹²⁵ In the case of Weston, the charges are referred to in euphemistic terms, but the language heavily implies rape.

¹¹²⁶ *SJA*, L/F/22/L/37, 'Printed Copy of the Defence of George Weston, Paymaster of the 2nd/96th Regt. of Foot, at His Court-Martial in Jersey', January 31st 1812

¹¹²⁷ *GSG*, De Saumarez Collection, VIII 2, 'Court of Enquiry into a Charge of Assault', July 9th 1810

as additional reinforcement for the garrison. Although no accurate returns have survived, it is known that 'three regiments' of Dutch infantry were stationed in Jersey by 1802,¹¹²⁸ and a comparison with other units shows that their likely combined strength was not less than 1,600. According to returns for the British fencible regiments attached to Jersey's garrison, these corps mustered an average of approximately 550 men,¹¹²⁹ while the two *émigré* regiments raised in the island reached a combined strength of 1,191 men.¹¹³⁰ As with the Russian troops, the response of the local authorities to offences committed by the Dutch soldiers was tempered by the need to maintain cordial relations with one of Britain's allies, and offenders – as far as possible – were punished¹¹³¹ according to Dutch military law.¹¹³² Moreover, while Gordon praised the 'uniform good discipline and orderly behaviour' of the Dutch troops,¹¹³³ fears of drunken altercations between British and Dutch soldiers during a 'day of celebration' in March 1802 had led the Lieutenant-Governor to forbid the former to go near the Dutch barracks or associate with the troops.¹¹³⁴

Stability Maintained: The Avoidance of Disorder

Although public disturbances and riots were commonplace in eighteenth-century Great Britain, the period spanned by the Great French War was a time of particular upheaval. Manchester witnessed food riots in 1795 and 1800,

¹¹²⁸ SJA, A/C1/1, General Order of August 25th 1802

¹¹²⁹ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, 'Returns for the Garrison of Jersey', April 1st 1796

¹¹³⁰ TNA, HO 69/15, 'Muster Rolls for French Émigré Regiments', December 24th 1795 (Mortemart) and April 29th 1796 (Castries)

¹¹³¹ In contrast to flogging, the standard punishment employed by the Dutch Army was that of 'running the gauntlet'. This punishment - used in the Royal Navy until 1806 - involved the offender being forced to march between two columns of soldiers, each of whom struck him with a length of knotted rope or the slings of their firelocks. See Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, pp. 25-26

¹¹³² SJA, A/C1/1, General Order of November 9th 1801

¹¹³³ Ibid, General Order of April 9th 1802

¹¹³⁴ Ibid, General Order of March 8th 1802

industrial riots in 1808, and a general breakdown of order in 1812, while London was the scene of food riots in 1794, political demonstrations against the Duke of York in 1806, and industrial protests throughout the period.¹¹³⁵ However, while it is clear that the Channel Islands were likewise threatened by various forms of disorder, it is also evident that – even accounting for differences in scale – the bailiwicks remained comparatively stable. Fundamentally, this can be attributed both to the means of law enforcement available in the respective jurisdictions, as well as the relative numbers requiring to be controlled. In Great Britain, the local authorities were often faced with ‘mobs’ whose ranks were swelled by inhabitants of multiple districts, and their frequent use of military force often resulted in ‘a chain of persecutions for murder against justices and soldiers’.¹¹³⁶ By contrast, the existence in the Channel Islands of organised law enforcement bodies such as the *Police Honorifique* – combined with the rarity of ‘island-wide’ disorder – meant that the forces of law and order were able to smother potential riots and violence by weight of numbers.

Indeed, while the economic pressures occasioned by an expanded garrison and the presence of a large community of refugees were felt far more acutely in the Channel Islands than in Great Britain, the resultant strain on food supplies was averted thanks to judicious management on the part of the authorities. While some attempts were made to stimulate discontent amongst the population – the *émigré* community and foreign troops being a convenient scapegoat for rising food prices¹¹³⁷ – the Islands’ fundamentally stable economy, combined with a shift in public opinion, neutralised this threat. Moreover, in spite of the political tensions which developed in both Jersey and Guernsey, the obligation of militia

¹¹³⁵ Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People*, pp. 164 and 361

¹¹³⁶ Stevenson, *Popular Disturbances*, p. 108

¹¹³⁷ TNA, HO 98/3, De Gruchy, Le Mesurier and Secretan to Dundas, London, February 26th 1793

service acted as a crucial focal point for the expression of patriotic sentiment, as demonstrated by the fact that even conscientious objectors and pacifists supported the existence of that force. As for the tension which arose between the civilian population and the various British and foreign regiments stationed in the Channel Islands, while it is true that this occasionally spilled over into open disorder, such incidents remained exceptional. Both in Jersey and Guernsey, the authorities can be seen to have employed a well-balanced mixture of military discipline, the civil judicial machinery and careful negotiation in order to manage security issues as quickly as possible, minimising their wider impact.

Finally, it must also be noted that the fundamental problem of feeding the population and garrison during times of scarcity were solved by means other than the importation of supplies. Although the Channel Islands' Newfoundland convoys were highlighted by the Chamber of Commerce as constituting a '[source of] provisions absolutely necessary for the existence of the inhabitants', they could not be relied upon exclusively.¹¹³⁸ As has been already highlighted, the local merchant ships were particularly favoured as targets by the *corsairs* of St. Malo and Cherbourg, and the necessity of obtaining naval escorts frequently delayed both the departure of the trans-Atlantic fleet and the arrival of supplies from Great Britain.¹¹³⁹ In light of such problems, the Channel Islands' privateers may be regarded as having played a critical – albeit indirect – role in the maintenance of public order; not only because they served to boost morale,¹¹⁴⁰ but also because condemned cargoes often provided a source of additional

¹¹³⁸ SJA, L/A/38/A1/2, Entry for March 7th 1795

¹¹³⁹ TNA, HO 69/3, Stephens to D'Auvergne, April 10th 1794 and Nepean to D'Auvergne, March 25th 1795; TNA, HO 69/4, Nepean to D'Auvergne, April 8th 1797; TNA, HO 69/5/2, Nepean to D'Auvergne, April 10th 1799; FO 95/612/81, D'Auvergne to Nepean, March 9th 1801; and ADM 1/224, D'Auvergne to Pole, March 18th 1809

¹¹⁴⁰ SJA, F/M/R1/25, 'Extract from the States of Jersey Regarding the Restrictions on Shooting in the Evening and Lighting Fires Outside', June 8th 1793

food supplies. In 1800, the States of Guernsey declared the island 'indebted' to the its privateers for having brought in three prizes carrying 500 tons of Spanish wheat, the distribution of which was described as having 'relieved [the inhabitants] from a state of scarcity'.¹¹⁴¹ Similarly, the cargoes of the *Duguete Erwertung* and the *Drie Enegheit* were put up for sale in Guernsey and Jersey in 1806 and 1808 respectively, the cargo of the former including 470 casks of red wine, and that of the latter an additional twenty casks of the same.¹¹⁴²

¹¹⁴¹ Tupper, *The History of Guernsey*, p. 430

¹¹⁴² *Gazette de Guernesey*, January 5th 1806 and January 16th 1808

Section II – The War at Sea

Chapter Six – ‘A Nest of Vypers’

As observed by Jamieson and Morieux, the long eighteenth century (1685-1830) was characterised by a significant shift in the position of the Channel Islands within the context of Anglo-French maritime rivalry. With the expansion of the Royal Navy, Great Britain gained the ability to directly challenge French dominance at sea, and the Channel Islands emerged as ‘a creative piece of [Britain’s] wider maritime strategy’ rather than a potential ‘defensive liability’.¹¹⁴³ Thus, while their proximity to the French coast had allowed both bailiwicks to emerge in the medieval period as key staging-posts for cross-Channel merchant traffic – specifically the wine and wool trades¹¹⁴⁴ – this natural advantage could now be exploited for offensive purposes. Consequently, while many senior officers may still have echoed the words of Philip Falle,¹¹⁴⁵ and warned ‘how greatly it would prejudice the safety and honour of [Great Britain], should [the French] become masters of the Islands’,¹¹⁴⁶ far more emphasis was placed upon their potential as a focal point for regional maritime control. In a particularly strongly-worded letter, Saumarez was instructed to ‘acquaint Lord Chatham that if ever the French effect a landing here, it will be too late for His Lordship to wish that he had appointed a sufficient squadron for the protection of the Islands, and what may be deemed of infinite more consequence, the [disruption] of the enemy’s convoys’.¹¹⁴⁷

¹¹⁴³ Jamieson, ‘The Channel Islands and British Maritime Strategy’, pp. 220-221; Morieux, ‘Diplomacy from Below’, 91

¹¹⁴⁴ Moore, *The Other British Isles*, p. 222

¹¹⁴⁵ Falle had acted as a ‘Special Envoy’ from the Channel Islands to the court of William III.

¹¹⁴⁶ Morieux, *The Channel*, p. 124

¹¹⁴⁷ *SROI*, SA 3/1/2/3, Letter of August 18th 1794

Although the Channel Islands could never offer the British the same degree of strategic support as corresponding bases in the Mediterranean (see chapter two), their potential as a base for offensive maritime operations was readily apparent. In December 1793, for example, a large number of French merchantmen were sighted off Alderney, and Earl Moira – then stationed in Guernsey – advised that ‘several frigates’ detached from the Channel Squadron might ‘stand a good chance of cutting [them] off...and distressing the enemy exceedingly’.¹¹⁴⁸ Similarly, the abovementioned letter to Saumarez included the prediction that ‘if ever the French take the Islands...they will station such a force here as will prevent our having them ever again in our possession. Both them and us will then know the value of keeping them’.¹¹⁴⁹ As Knight observed, while the convoys passing along the east coast of Britain ‘[carried] most of the heavy goods required in London, and upon which the supply of the army and navy depended’, French privateers ‘never slackened their efforts to capture British cargoes and ships’ in all quarters.¹¹⁵⁰ With respect to the ‘swarm’ of *corsairs* operating out of Cherbourg and St. Malo, Royal Navy vessels stationed in the Channel Islands were ideally placed to disrupt their activities (see chapter seven),¹¹⁵¹ while the local privateers either assisted in this endeavour¹¹⁵² or carried out their own attacks on enemy commerce.¹¹⁵³

¹¹⁴⁸ SJA, L/F/08/A/26, Moira to MacBride, December 26th 1793

¹¹⁴⁹ SROI, SA 3/1/2/3, Letter of August 18th 1794

¹¹⁵⁰ Knight, ‘British Defensive Strategy at Sea’, pp. 93 and 95

¹¹⁵¹ TNA, WO 1/922/85, D’Auvergne to Dundas, March 31st 1797; HO 69/12/9, Dalrymple to Bouillon, June 21st 1797 and HO 69/17/43, De St. Croix to D’Auvergne, March 25th 1797

¹¹⁵² The vast majority of the *mauvais corsairs* operating out of the bailiwicks during the Great French War were ‘private ships-of-war’ – vessels specifically intended to operate against enemy merchantmen and coasters – with the remainder being made up of local merchantmen whose captain was empowered by letter-of-marque to make opportunistic captures during trading voyages.

¹¹⁵³ TNA, ADM 1/223, Saumarez to Heron, March 2nd 1807

During the decades prior to the Great French War, the Channel Islands privateers had expanded rapidly, both in terms of overall numbers and average displacement. While the average local privateer during the War of the Austrian Succession had displaced 61.5 tons burthen, this had increased to 77.1 tons burthen during the Seven Years War and 95.2 tons burthen in the American War of Independence. As to the Islands' individual share in commerce raiding, these three conflicts witnessed a considerable increase in Jersey's participation – from 34.1% to 48% – while Alderney also emerged as a minority stakeholder, its share of the trade increasing from 1.2% to 11.65%.¹¹⁵⁴ Given this rate of growth, it is unsurprising that Dumouriez described the local privateers as 'the despair of France', describing them as 'capturing a great number of vessels and destroying all communication and commerce between [our] ports before we can adopt any precautions'.¹¹⁵⁵ Their success in previous conflicts was likewise cited by the local authorities as proof of the privateers' strategic value, as when Doyle claimed that the American War of Independence had seen the Guernsey privateers destroy shipping and cargo valued at £1,500,000.¹¹⁵⁶ Although the veracity of such a claim is unknown, the *Resolution*, *Hector*, *Lord Amherst*, and *Triumph* brought in prizes worth £193,963 in 1779, and that 1782 saw the Alderney privateers take prizes valued at £212,381.¹¹⁵⁷

In terms of the years before 1793, Raban and Jamieson have highlighted that the Seven Years War saw the Islanders cruising as far as the Spanish coast,¹¹⁵⁸ however, the majority of prizes taken during the mid-eighteenth century were seized between the latitudes of Ushant and the Gironde. Taking a random

¹¹⁵⁴ See Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise*

¹¹⁵⁵ Rose, Broadley (eds.), *Dumouriez and the Defence of England*, pp. 319-322

¹¹⁵⁶ TNA, WO 55/1549/6, 'Doyle's Report re. Guernsey and Alderney', undated

¹¹⁵⁷ Carey, *The Channel Islands*, p. 141-142

¹¹⁵⁸ Raban, 'The Profits of Privateering', 300-301

sample of one hundred vessels condemned to Channel Island privateers during the American War of Independence, Jamieson found that almost two-thirds were taken in the Bay of Biscay, whereas only seven were taken in the vicinity of Ushant, and only eleven between Brest and Le Havre.¹¹⁵⁹ This pattern would be emulated during the 'Great French War': although the records of the Guernsey firm Carteret Priaulx indicate that some of their privateers cruised to ports as distant as Lisbon, Cadiz and Gibraltar,¹¹⁶⁰ the majority of their vessels continued to hunt far closer to home. In general, the trend was a result of necessity rather than design: as has been already mentioned, the vast majority of Channel Islands privateers were not only 'private men-of-war', but also comparatively small vessels. According to Meyer's study, only 53.5% of the Guernsey vessels and 36.5% of the Jersey vessels deployed between 1793 and 1815 exceeded 100 tons burthen, and it is likely that many of these larger vessels would have only rarely ventured beyond local waters.¹¹⁶¹

A Portrait of the Channel Island Privateers, 1793-1815

While the eighteenth century may have witnessed a steady increase in the average size of the Channel Islands' privateers, a considerable disparity continued to exist between individual vessels, both in terms of crew size, armament and tonnage. During the American War of Independence, Jersey's privateers had included *Diligence*, (fifty tons burthen, forty men, six 2-pdr carriage guns and eight swivel guns),¹¹⁶² *Surprise* (eighty tons burthen, thirty

¹¹⁵⁹ Jamieson, 'The Return to Privateering', pp. 168-169

¹¹⁶⁰ *PLG*, Uncatalogued, Robertson and Schon (Gibraltar) to Carteret Priaulx, March 29th 1805, and Anon. (Falmouth) to Carteret Priaulx, April 23rd 1805

¹¹⁶¹ Meyer, 'The Channel Islands Privateers', p. 183

¹¹⁶² *SJA*, L/C/60/E5/1, 'Letters of Marque Awarded to John Fiott of the *Diligence*', August 26th 1778

men, six 3-pdr carriage guns and six swivel guns)¹¹⁶³ and *Hero* (one hundred tons burthen, sixty-five men, ten carriage guns and four swivel guns).¹¹⁶⁴ Similarly, the privateers fitted out at Jersey during the Great French War included vessels as large as *Neptune* (138 tons burthen, forty-five men, fourteen carriage guns),¹¹⁶⁵ and as small as *Lightning* (five tons, two swivel guns) and *Prince William* (five tons, four swivel guns).¹¹⁶⁶ However, such examples mark the extremes of the scale: far more typical were *Success* (fifty-one tons burthen, thirty men, six 4-pdr carriage guns)¹¹⁶⁷ and *Lottery* (twenty-four tons burthen, eighteen men, two 2-pdr carriage guns).¹¹⁶⁸ Consequently, the Jersey vessels were, at least in terms of size, comparable to the 'swarm of small French privateers', reported by Royal Navy officers as being between fifteen and thirty-five tons burthen.¹¹⁶⁹

In spite of the Channel Islands' increased use of 'deep water' privateers over the course of the eighteenth century, a key distinction must be highlighted between the local vessels and British privateers in general. As has been already stated, the vast majority of vessels deployed by the Channel Islanders were of less than 100 tons burthen, and the vast majority were 'private men-of-war' rather than 'letter-of-marque' merchantmen.¹¹⁷⁰ This stands in stark contrast to overall trend: while Starkey concludes that some 3,605 privateers were deployed from all British ports – including the Channel Islands – between 1793

¹¹⁶³ SJA, L/C/60/E5/2, 'Letters of Marque Awarded to Philip De Gruchy and Edward Le Couteur of the *Surprize*', December 20th 1780

¹¹⁶⁴ SJA, L/C/60/E5/3, 'Letters of Marque Awarded to John Fiott and Philip Le Couteur of the *Hero*', January 24th 1782,

¹¹⁶⁵ SJA, L/C/60/E5/5, 'Letters of Marque Awarded to Theo Ambrose of the *Neptune*', May 16th 1800

¹¹⁶⁶ Meyer, 'The Channel Island Privateers', p. 175

¹¹⁶⁷ SJA, L/C/209/C1/2/13, 'Letters of Marque Awarded to Philip Payn of the *Success*', December 4th 1807

¹¹⁶⁸ SJA, L/F/67/A/1, 'Letters of Marque Awarded to Francis Journeux of the *Lottery*', November 29th 1797

¹¹⁶⁹ Avery, 'The Naval Protection of Britain's Maritime Trade', p. 18

¹¹⁷⁰ Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise* p. 35

and 1815, only 391 (10.85%) of these were 'private men-of-war'.¹¹⁷¹ The incongruous nature of the Channel Islands' vessels serves to illustrate the extent to which their involvement in privateering – while ubiquitous throughout the long eighteenth century¹¹⁷² – was dictated by the almost exclusively agrarian local economy. Prior to the opening up of new South American markets in the latter years of the war,¹¹⁷³ trans-Atlantic trade was limited to the triangular cod trade,¹¹⁷⁴ and although the Islanders did trade extensively with Continental Europe, the vast majority of vessels thus engaged were of only relatively small tonnage.¹¹⁷⁵

A further restriction of the type of vessels deployed from the Channel Islands – one which receives little acknowledgement amongst local historians – arose from the Islands' involvement in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. As highlighted by Ford, any involvement of the bailiwicks in this sector appears to have been largely indirect, Islanders being part-owners or captains of British slaving ships registered in the Channel Islands or supplying essential goods and services such as pilots.¹¹⁷⁶ As a result, the Islands had little or no need for large-scale investment in the types of vessels used by merchants in Bristol or Liverpool, and which might be readily converted into 'letter-of-marque' traders.¹¹⁷⁷ Since these were designed only to carry out opportunistic attacks during the course of an ordinary trading voyage (see above), they had to be sufficiently large to carry a 'prize crew' in addition to their normal cargo and supplies.¹¹⁷⁸ This is not to

¹¹⁷¹ Starkey, 'A Restless Spirit', p. 132

¹¹⁷² TNA, HO 98/9, Gordon to Pelham, March 20th 1803

¹¹⁷³ Cox, 'Transformation of St. Peter Port', Abstract

¹¹⁷⁴ SJA, L/A/38/A1/2, Entries for February 9th 1793 and March 6th 1793

¹¹⁷⁵ Duncan, *A History of Guernsey*, p. 249

¹¹⁷⁶ D. Ford, 'A Respectable Trade or Against Human Dignity?', *THM* 2 (2006) 6-10

¹¹⁷⁷ See G. Williams, *History of the Liverpool Privateers and Letters of Marque* (London, 1897)

¹¹⁷⁸ Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise* p. 35

say that the Islanders did not send out any such vessels:¹¹⁷⁹ rather that their numbers were curtailed by the fact that neither Jersey nor Guernsey housed a dedicated shipbuilding industry until the early 1820s (see chapter ten).¹¹⁸⁰ As a result, large merchant vessels operating out of the Channel Islands were typically built 'on contract' in British or American shipyards, as in the case of *Lion*,¹¹⁸¹ and *Sarnia*,¹¹⁸² or were re-commissioned prizes, as in the case of *Ceres*¹¹⁸³ and *L'Invention*.¹¹⁸⁴

The Channel Islands' Privateersmen – What Motivated Them?

Given the popularity of privateering amongst the inhabitants of the Channel Islands, the question must be asked: why did 'the people of the sea' undertake these ventures? Referring to traditional French historiography, Best and Crowhurst have both highlighted the entanglement of myth and reality which have 'muddied the waters' with respect to the motivations of the privateers and their *armateurs*. In general, it has been usual to depict privateering as either 'the optimistic illusion [of] a tolerable substitute for real naval power', a legitimate aspect of naval strategy, or the work of zealous patriots and fortune hunters.¹¹⁸⁵ Similar interpretations have been put forward concerning the British and Channel Island privateers: Podger characterises the latter as having been a mixture of 'chancers, gamblers, and patriots',¹¹⁸⁶ while Black argues that the former were motivated by 'a fusion of patriotism and profit'.¹¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Ritchie

¹¹⁷⁹ Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and Smuggling', p. 213

¹¹⁸⁰ A. Podger, 'Jersey's Shipbuilding Industry', *ABSJ* 18:2 (1962) 229-35

¹¹⁸¹ Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and Smuggling', p. 215

¹¹⁸² Meyer, 'The Channel Island Privateers', p. 175

¹¹⁸³ Podger, *Nest of Vypers*, p. 165

¹¹⁸⁴ Meyer, 'The Channel Island Privateers', p. 175

¹¹⁸⁵ Best, *War and Society*, p. 145; Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 1

¹¹⁸⁶ Podger, *Nest of Vypers*, p. 169

¹¹⁸⁷ J. Black, *Britain as a Military Power, 1688-1815*, (Oxford, 1999) p. 100

emphasises that, even by the Great French War, 'commerce-raiding or preying on private property at sea was still regarded as a legitimate war aim',¹¹⁸⁸ while Meyer focuses on the manner in which 'the Channel Islanders [remained] a veritable thorn in the mercantile flesh of France'.¹¹⁸⁹

For those inhabitants who embarked upon privateering ventures during the 'Great French War', a number of motivations might be considered. Certainly, the glamorous image and the prospect of personal enrichment would have played a significant role for many of the Islands' seamen, as well as those farmers and labourers who supplemented their income through seasonal fishing and inter-insular trade. According to Best, the French *corsairs* cultivated the image of fighting 'a dashing maritime guerrilla war' and provided the general population with several 'maritime folk-heroes',¹¹⁹⁰ and there is clear evidence that the Channel Islands' privateers attained a similar status in the eyes of the local inhabitants. In 1793, for example, an Act was passed by the States of Jersey which forbade local privateers from firing their cannons while either entering or leaving port, indicating that it was customary at this time for captains to 'salute' the population when embarking on or returning from a cruise.¹¹⁹¹ Similarly, the reputation garnered by privateers in previous conflicts encouraged emulation: the Le Mesuriers of Alderney and the Careys and Dobrées of Guernsey had become rich and powerful during the mid-eighteenth century, and much of their wealth had derived from privateering ventures.¹¹⁹²

¹¹⁸⁸ R.C. Ritchie, 'Government Measures Against Piracy and Privateering in the Atlantic, 1750-1815', in Starkey, Van Eyck Van Heslinga, De Moor, (eds.), *Pirates and Privateers*, pp. 17-18

¹¹⁸⁹ Meyer, 'The Channel Island Privateers', p. 173

¹¹⁹⁰ Best, *War and Society*, pp. 144-145

¹¹⁹¹ SJA, F/M/R1/25, 'Restrictions on Shooting in the Evening and Lighting Fires Outside', June 8th 1793

¹¹⁹² Raban, *Profits of Privateering*, 299

It is certainly true that, for these prominent *armateurs*, privateering brought in vast profits: as mentioned above, eight vessels from Alderney had generated £212,381 in prize money during 1782, and all eight captains were in the employ of John Le Masurier (see appendix b).¹¹⁹³ Unsurprisingly, a certain degree of ‘professional’ jealousy existed between the privateers and their counterparts in the Royal Navy and merchant fleet, and the success of the fortunate few gave rise to the myth that ‘fat profits [had] been made at the expense of both navy and nation’.¹¹⁹⁴ In reality, however, the majority of local *armateurs* – as with their counterparts in Britain and France – found that privateering brought little reward, and their cruises often resulted in considerable losses. During the Seven Years War, for example, Jerseyman Pierre Labey had seized around £1,000 in prizes, but Raban’s analysis of his accounts revealed that he would have been fortunate to see £50 profit – exclusive of wages – per cruise.¹¹⁹⁵ Moreover, Raban calculated that over half of Jersey’s privateers operating during the Seven Years War ended their cruises in the hands of the enemy, and that even successful *armateurs* such as the Dobrée-Carey consortium often struggled to turn a significant profit.¹¹⁹⁶

Consequently, it can be seen that the exploits of figures such as Thomas Pickstock (*Herald*), Peter Duval (*Vulture*) and John Knight (*Maria*) were wholly exceptional;¹¹⁹⁷ captains had a far greater chance of returning empty-handed, out-of-pocket,¹¹⁹⁸ or imprisoned at Valenciennes or St. Nazaire.¹¹⁹⁹ Even so, it

¹¹⁹³ B. Bonnard, *Ships and Soldiers: A Military and Maritime History of the Island of Alderney* (Guernsey, 2013) p. 52

¹¹⁹⁴ Raban, ‘Profits of Privateering’, 300

¹¹⁹⁵ P. Raban, ‘Pierre Labey, A Jersey Privateer Captain in the Seven Years War, 1756-1763’, *ABSJ* 25:2 (1990) 317-29

¹¹⁹⁶ Raban, ‘Profits of Privateering’, 301

¹¹⁹⁷ Meyer, ‘The Channel Island Privateers’, p. 183

¹¹⁹⁸ *Gazette de L’Isle de Guernesey*, September 6th, 1806

¹¹⁹⁹ *SJA*, A/A5/2, Letter of January 15th 1809

appears that a sufficient number of captains generated profits modest enough to maintain the impression that privateering was a viable business venture for the islanders during wartime, albeit on a sporadic basis. This is illustrated by the short but successful careers of captains such as P. Hamon (nine prizes in 1793), G. Aubin (seven prizes during 1797-8), J. Aubin (four prizes in 1798), Torr  (eleven prizes during 1798-9), Knight, (thirteen prizes during 1799-1800), and Le Bair (five prizes during 1799-1800).¹²⁰⁰ The brief nature of these ventures likely arose from the fact that many vessels were able to engage in only a handful of cruises before the owners were forced to withdraw them from service for repair or to be broken up.¹²⁰¹ Even in the case of Daniel Hamon, the most successful of the Islands' captains, his haul of prizes¹²⁰² was amassed over the course of three comparatively short cruises, which in turn were spread over a period of thirteen years (1797-1801, 1803-06, and 1809-10).¹²⁰³

Overall, Hamon's cruises resulted in the loss of 2,300 tons of French shipping, including three full-rigged ships of around 300 tons burthen; however, it was by no means guaranteed that such prizes would bring significant reward. Nor does the size of the vessel appear to have affected the chances of securing captures: the *Mars* of Guernsey (20 guns, 130 men) had been one of the largest privateers operating out of the Bailiwicks during the American Revolutionary War, but its sole prize was valued at only £250.¹²⁰⁴ Such a scenario was no less frequent amongst the Malouin privateers, of whom Robert Surcouf was perhaps the most skilled and experienced, having been at sea since the age of

¹²⁰⁰ Podger, *Nest of Vypers*, p. 163-5 and Meyer, 'The Channel Island Privateers', p. 181

¹²⁰¹ Raban, 'Channel Island Privateering', 287-99

¹²⁰² Meyer lists him as having taken twenty-four prizes in *Phoenix* and three in *Vulture*; Podger records him as having taken twenty prizes in *Phoenix* and six in *Vulture*.

¹²⁰³ Meyer, 'The Channel Island Privateers', p. 181

¹²⁰⁴ Tupper, *The History of Guernsey*, p. 430

thirteen.¹²⁰⁵ Even he struggled to turn a profit as an *armateur*: between 1803 and 1814, only thirteen of the fifteen cruises undertaken by his eleven vessels resulted in any captures, while one of these was laid up without taking any prizes, and five incurred considerable losses. This record is reflected in Surcouf's accounts: the bulk of his net profit of 202,216 *LF* being generated by a single cruise, and indeed the capture of a single prize, valued at 280,384 *Livres Français*. As for the Malouin privateers as a whole, Crowhurst has calculated that they generated a net profit of 14,021,365 *LF* between October 1806 and May 1814, but it must be highlighted that this figure was inclusive of losses amounting to 3,923,000 *LF*.¹²⁰⁶

Rather than being driven by 'a romantic search for adventure or greed for fat prizes',¹²⁰⁷ the bulk of the local captains were far more likely driven by a desire to escape a life of endemic poverty and unemployment.¹²⁰⁸ As has been already noted, the presence of a greatly expanded garrison, a large refugee community and – during the winter of 1799-1800 – several thousand Russian soldiers (see chapters two and five) placed considerable pressure on the Channel Islands' food supplies. Indeed, it was only thanks to skilful management on the part of the military authorities, as well as the exploitation of the wartime privileges enjoyed by the local merchants, that the bailiwicks were able to avoid the riots which occurred in London and the south of England.¹²⁰⁹ Moreover, despite the vibrant Gaspé cod trade having encouraged more and more Jerseymen to establish themselves in the Newfoundland settlements,¹²¹⁰ this trade could not

¹²⁰⁵ J.F. Mahé de La Bourdonnais, *Vie du Capitaine Robert Surcouf* (Paris, 1828) p. 7

¹²⁰⁶ Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, pp. 22-24

¹²⁰⁷ Raban, 'Channel Island Privateering' 287-299

¹²⁰⁸ Raban, 'Pierre Labey', 317-318

¹²⁰⁹ Olson Jr., *Economics of Wartime Shortage*, pp. 51-53

¹²¹⁰ Fay, *Channel Islands and Newfoundland*, pp. 11-12

absorb all the surplus mariners in the Channel Islands.¹²¹¹ Since their only viable employment options were either to join the privateering crews or enlist in the Royal Navy,¹²¹² Crowhurst has argued for the existence of a 'third way' in terms of the motivations of privateers throughout both Great Britain and France.

According to Crowhurst, the 'auxiliary navy/fortune-hunters' dichotomy remains inadequate, as is the stereotype that the vast majority of privateers and their *armateurs* were wealthy members of the mercantile class. Employing the *corsairs* of St. Malo as a case study, he has argued that the majority of privateers during the Great French War emerged out of 'a large reserve of hardy, experienced seamen' who sought an opportunity to solve 'the difficulty of continuing any other form of economic activity' during time of war.¹²¹³ However, as shall become clear later in the chapter, this is not to dismiss the value of the individual privateer to the State which he served; as Starkey states, all commerce raiders, regardless of their motivation, 'sought to profit from the seizure and legal condemnation of other people's property'. This ensured that the State enjoyed, in its turn, the benefits of the 'debilitating effects that captures had on the enemy's commerce',¹²¹⁴ and Crowhurst's 'third way' acknowledges the reality that most privateers were motivated neither by desire for riches nor patriotic fervour, but by a belief in privateering as legitimate employment.¹²¹⁵ This is similar to the situation which prevailed in the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic War: impressment, threat of prosecution – and, to a

¹²¹¹ Raban, 'Pierre Labey', 318

¹²¹² Raban, 'Channel Island Privateering', 287-299

¹²¹³ Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, pp. 15-16

¹²¹⁴ D. Starkey, 'Voluntaries and Sea Robbers: A Review of the Academic Literature on Privateering, Corsairing, Buccanneering and Piracy', *MM* 97 (2011) 132

¹²¹⁵ Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, p. 16

lesser extent, wages – all outranked patriotism and the chance of prize-money as inducements to join the Service.¹²¹⁶

The Economic Impact of Privateering

As highlighted by Meyer, the majority of privateer captains, when confronted by a superior force, ‘generally saw flight or capitulation as the only realistic lines of conduct’; however, a number of Channel Islanders¹²¹⁷ developed well-deserved reputations as ‘fighting captains’.¹²¹⁸ Unfortunately, the coverage of these men within local scholarship has all too often matched Black’s model of ‘novelistic, if not partisan’ history, the focus being placed on ‘celebratory tales and exemplary narrative...suiting those who like their scimitars gleaming’.¹²¹⁹ In place of a detailed analysis of the privateers’ contribution to the wider naval war, traditional accounts have been dominated by the most dramatic aspects of their careers, providing blow-by-blow accounts of their engagements. Thus, Saunders tells us that under Duval’s command, the 100-ton *Vulture* – despite being armed with only four guns – ‘became the terror of the mercantile trade in the Bay of Biscay’, and inflicted such losses that the Bayonne merchants fitted out a brig (180 tons, sixteen guns) specifically to hunt her down. Likewise, his account of Duval’s conduct during the resultant action is reminiscent of that of Nelson at Copenhagen; advised by his officers to surrender, Duval is supposed to have replied ‘surrender be damned! As long as I have a leg to stand on, we’ll fight. After that, you can do as you like’.¹²²⁰

¹²¹⁶ M. Duffy, ‘The Foundations of British Naval Power’, pp. 69-71

¹²¹⁷ Examples include Captain Pickstock of the *Herald*, Captain Duval of the *Vulture*, Captain Knight of the *Maria* and Captain Vicq of the *Ceres*

¹²¹⁸ Meyer, ‘The Channel Island Privateers’, p. 183

¹²¹⁹ J. Black, *Rethinking Military History*, (Abingdon, 2004) pp. 27-28

¹²²⁰ Saunders, ‘The Corsairs of Jersey’, 241

In terms of their ability to act as a military force, the primary objective of the Channel Islands privateers – as with commerce raiders of all nationalities – was to inflict damage upon the enemy's economic powerbase, and thereby disrupt their ability to wage war. Although this will be investigated in greater detail at a later point, the nature of 'strategic blockade' demonstrates that the geographic situation of the Channel Islands provided the British with a key advantage in the context of localised economic warfare (see chapter seven). Even with the pre-war extension of the *chemins ferré*¹²²¹ having provided good quality roads between France's channel ports and the interior, the use of coastal convoys remained the most efficient means of moving equipment, food and troops to Brest, Cherbourg, Granville and St. Malo.¹²²² By far the most busy shipping lanes were those passing between Le Havre and Brest¹²²³ and through the Race of Alderney to St. Malo, Granville and St. Brieux,¹²²⁴ and as highlighted by Morieux, the Channel Islands were ideally placed so as to allow the local privateers to interrupt this traffic.¹²²⁵ However, while Gordon highlighted local commerce-raiding ventures as representing a continual drain on militia manpower,¹²²⁶ the potency of the Channel Island privateers was surely greatest during the *Chouannerie*, since the extent of insurgent activity rendered Brest all but cut off from Paris (see chapter nine).¹²²⁷

As for the actual impact of the Channel Islands privateers on French coastal traffic, this can be appreciated only if a picture can be built up of the volumes

¹²²¹ TNA, WO 1/923/1, 'Notes Taken by D'Auvergne when Travelling in that Country during 1785-91'

¹²²² TNA, WO 1/606, Le Mesurier to Dundas, July 23rd 1794; ADM 1/6032, 'Intelligence Collected from Prisoners Taken in the Danish East Indiaman and English Brig *Triumph* off Brest', July 28th 1794; HO 69/3, Stephens to D'Auvergne, January 20th 1795; FO 95/611, D'Auvergne to Windham, September 2nd 1800; and FO 95/612/44, D'Auvergne to St. Vincent, September 21st 1800

¹²²³ TNA, ADM 1/6032, Intelligence Received on March 24th 1794

¹²²⁴ TNA, WO 1/606, Le Mesurier to Dundas, December 4th 1794

¹²²⁵ Morieux, *The Channel*, p. 174

¹²²⁶ TNA, HO 98/3, Gordon to Pelham, March 20th 1803

¹²²⁷ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, p. 55

and types of cargoes seized.¹²²⁸ Certainly, the wealth of experience possessed by the Islands' privateer captains – together with their ability to operate in concert with vessels from other British ports¹²²⁹ – led to considerable damage being inflicted upon the French mercantile fleet.¹²³⁰ Moreover, while it is true that the capture of large prizes may have been rare for the Islanders, who 'aimed to avoid a fight wherever possible',¹²³¹ those that were taken often represented significant losses for the enemy. During the period March-May 1793, the Jersey privateers claimed as prize the vessels *Indispensable* (500 tons) and *L'Heureux* (400 tons) laden with sugar, rice, tobacco and timber,¹²³² as well as an unnamed French sloop laden with brandy and wine.¹²³³ Similarly, September 1806 saw the Guernsey privateers account for the *Union* schooner of Baltimore, laden with sugar and coffee; a *chassé-marie* with a cargo of cider and coal; and the French lugger *Uraye*, with a cargo of brandy and wine.¹²³⁴ However, the seizure of such cargoes did not simply represent losses for the mercantile fleets of France and her allies – who received compensation from government¹²³⁵ – they also compounded the serious food shortages facing St. Malo, Brest, and the hinterlands which they supported.¹²³⁶

Furthermore, it must not be forgotten the seizure of large shipments of enemy food supplies was a considerable boon to the Channel Islands themselves, particularly with respect to the need of the local authorities to ensure a viable food supply. As has been highlighted, many of those who embarked on

¹²²⁸ Raban, 'Channel Island Privateering', 287-99

¹²²⁹ *PLG*, Uncatalogued, Brock, Le Mesurier and Co. to Carteret Priaulx, April 23rd 1805

¹²³⁰ *TNA*, WO 1/607, States of Jersey to Dundas, May 1st 1798

¹²³¹ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 70; Meyer, 'The Channel Island Privateers', pp. 183-184

¹²³² Bonnard, *Ships and Soldiers*, pp. 85-86

¹²³³ *The Times*, May 1st 1793

¹²³⁴ *Gazette de L'Isle de Guernesey*, September 13th and 20th 1806

¹²³⁵ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 6

¹²³⁶ S. Marzagalli, 'French Privateering during the French Wars', in B.A. Elleman and S.C.M. Paine (eds.), *Commerce Raiding: Historical Case Studies, 1755-2009* (Newport, Rhode Island, 2014) p. 44

privateering ventures did so in order to escape from a life of poverty:¹²³⁷ even before the vast influx of refugees from western France¹²³⁸ drove up food prices (see chapter five), discontent over the cost of basic necessities was often raised in the States.¹²³⁹ When, for example, British government proposed that supplies might be sent from the Channel Islands to the royalist armies in France, Craig replied that although a 'good supply of both beef and port' could be spared, the local flour stocks were so low that 'not a sack' could be given over.¹²⁴⁰ Thus, while 1795 witnessed the first attempts on the part of the British government to provide aid to the inhabitants,¹²⁴¹ the Channel Islands' privateers can be seen to have helped to supplement the consignments received. This becomes clear when it is remembered that Fort Regent was intended to store 12,500 rations of rice and 2,000 rations of sugar,¹²⁴² both in order to provide the daily rations of the garrison troops and supply the population in the event of an invasion.

Finally, even though the majority of the Bailiwicks' privateers were suited only for preying on small, lightly armed or unarmed craft, such captures were vital for reasons other than simply achieving the objective of disrupting the enemy's economy.¹²⁴³ Not only did the seizure *en masse* of French fishing ships hamper the provisioning of her armed forces at the commencement of war, but it must be remembered that such vessels were often employed in espionage,¹²⁴⁴ for the

¹²³⁷ TNA, HO 98/3, De Gruchy, Le Mesurier and Secretan to Dundas, London, February 26th 1793

¹²³⁸ TNA, HO 98/25, 'List of Ecclesiastics of Normandy Ordered to Embark at Guernsey for England', and 'List of French Ecclesiastics from the Province of Brittany who are now Refugees at Guernsey', both undated

¹²³⁹ Lempriere, *History*, pp. 133-134

¹²⁴⁰ SJA, L/F/08/A/12, 'Craig to Moira Regarding Provisions for the Royalist Army', November 28th 1793

¹²⁴¹ *Gazette de L'Ile de Jersey*, November 7th 1795

¹²⁴² SJA, A/A1/3, Letter of July 16th 1810

¹²⁴³ Faggioni, *Fortifications*, p. 289

¹²⁴⁴ SJA, L/F/97/M5/10, 'Supplementary General Orders for all Guards Stationed on the Coast of Jersey', January 20th 1808

smuggling of arms,¹²⁴⁵ or were commandeered by the authorities to serve as troop transports.¹²⁴⁶ As highlighted by Morieux, the War of the Austrian Succession had witnessed the confirmation of a *de jure* neutral status for fishermen,¹²⁴⁷ meaning that were to be allowed free passage unless found to be smuggling, transporting warlike stores, or conducting espionage.¹²⁴⁸ However, while the Channel Islands' privateers were, on several of occasions, forced to liberate illegally-seized fishing boats,¹²⁴⁹ the reality is that, whatever the 'official' agreements reached between combatants, fishermen continued to be employed in covert activity (see section iii).¹²⁵⁰ As such, even after Don permitted a licensed oyster trade between Cancale and Grouville, French boats were required to rendezvous with a British warship and offload onto Jersey boats, so as to prevent their 'getting any intelligence of consequence from the shore'.¹²⁵¹

The Comparative Effectiveness of the Privateers

However, while the Channel Island privateers were clearly able to inflict considerable damage upon French commercial shipping, it must also be ascertained as to whether they posed a sufficient threat to rival *corsairs* and warships. Again, the experience of previous conflicts would suggest that the answer should be in the affirmative: during the Seven Years War, the losses suffered by French merchants operating between Ushant and Bordeaux had

¹²⁴⁵ TNA, WO 1/922/237, 'Translation of the Substance of Communications from Normandy, received September 6th 1797', September 8th 1797

¹²⁴⁶ TNA, ADM 1/6032, 'Intelligence Communicated by Captain John Burt of the Sloop *Britannia*', April 5th 1794; and ADM 1/6035, 'Intelligence Respecting Force in the French Ports of the Channel, Transmitted by Mr. Hammond', September 23rd 1803

¹²⁴⁷ Morieux, 'Diplomacy from Below', 100

¹²⁴⁸ TNA, HO 69/5/42, 'Order from the Admiralty Respecting Treatment of Fishermen', June 1st 1800

¹²⁴⁹ TNA, HO 69/8/41, Smith to D'Auvergne, October 6th 1795

¹²⁵⁰ J. Ashelford, *In the English Service*, pp. 85; Morieux, 'Diplomacy from Below', 109; and SJA, A/A1/6, Letter of March 4th 1812

¹²⁵¹ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of February 1st 1811

been so extensive that nine frigates had been deployed in the area to neutralise 'les mauvaises corsairs de Guernsey et Jersey'. *Mauvaises* was indeed an apt description: during both the Seven Years War and the American Revolutionary War, the Channel Islands *corsairs* had, collectively, accounted for a significant proportion of the prizes taken. Excluding those captured in concert, 332 enemy vessels had been condemned to British privateers during the Seven Years War, while this figure had risen to 1,005 vessels during the American Revolutionary War. Of these prizes, a total of 152 and 435 were condemned to captains operating out of the Channel Islands during each conflict, representing 45.8% and 42.6% of the respective totals.¹²⁵²

Since the Channel Islands occupied what was effectively a 'front-line' position, their privateers were most potent in the early stages of the conflict (i.e. the early months of 1793 and the immediate aftermath of the breakdown of the Peace of Amiens in 1803).¹²⁵³ In order to reach the lucrative hunting grounds in the Bay of Biscay, the vast majority of British privateers were required to spend many days, or even weeks, fighting against the prevailing westerly and south-westerly winds. By contrast, while the Channel Island privateers were required to battle these same winds in order to reach Ushant, they could also take advantage of the prevailing winds to raid virtually the whole western coast of the Cotentin Peninsula, ambushing French shipping on the run up-Channel to La Havre and the Seine Estuary.¹²⁵⁴ Indeed, while Jersey's mercantile losses between 1803 and 1805 are estimated as having amounted to two-thirds of her civilian shipping and 900 of her sailors,¹²⁵⁵ this situation was by no means one-sided;

¹²⁵² Raban, 'Channel Island Privateering' 287-99

¹²⁵³ Rose, Broadley (eds.), *Dumouriez and the Defence of England*, p. 319

¹²⁵⁴ TNA, HO 98/11, Don to Portland, May 22nd 1806

¹²⁵⁵ Podger, *Nest of Vypers*, p. 91

not least because the local privateers 'rendered infinite service' in concert with the Royal Navy's scouts.¹²⁵⁶ In petitioning for letters of marque, Carteret Priaux argued that 'vessels fitted out in this place will...thereby do our County a service which on all occasions we could wish to have in our power to promote',¹²⁵⁷ and the accuracy of this claim is attested to by the number of prisoners delivered up by the privateers for interrogation by D'Auvergne.¹²⁵⁸

In light of Don's observation that it was 'impossible constantly to blockade the eight ports on the French coast from Cherbourg to St. Malo', the Channel Islands can thus be seen to have provided the British government with two key advantages. Firstly, even when weather conditions or pressure on resources made it impossible to maintain a formal blockade of the Breton-Norman coast, the local privateers might still be relied upon to 'greatly interrupt the enemy's coasting trade, and prevent almost any mercantile communication with St. Malo [and other key ports]'.¹²⁵⁹ Secondly, it must be remembered that privateers could be commissioned far more quickly than warships:¹²⁶⁰ one month after the breakdown of the Peace of Amiens, intelligence revealed that St. Malo still possessed 'no vessels-of-war ready for sea', yet the port had already begun 'fitting out privateers on a larger scale than usual'.¹²⁶¹ Consequently, the local privateers were ideally placed to provide direct assistance to the Royal Navy in its efforts to disrupt enemy naval preparations; both by means of intercepting

¹²⁵⁶ TNA, HO 98/24, Thomas Dundas to David Dundas, March 12th 1793

¹²⁵⁷ Ibid, Carteret Priaux to Thomas Dundas, March 12th 1793

¹²⁵⁸ SJA, L/A/38/A1, Entry for August 11th 1798 and L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to D'Auvergne, August 19th 1801

¹²⁵⁹ TNA, HO 98/11, Don to Spencer, May 22nd 1806

¹²⁶⁰ TNA, WO 1/922/1, D'Auvergne to Dundas, January 3rd 1797; WO 1/922/201, D'Auvergne to Dundas, June 29th 1797; and FO 95/609, 'Substance of the Information Received from the Continent', December 19th 1798

¹²⁶¹ TNA, ADM 1/6035, Extract of a Letter from Major-General Doyle, Guernsey, June 12th 1803

enemy vessels attempting to enter port¹²⁶² and by exploiting their crews' intimacy with the waters off the Normandy coast to operate areas inaccessible to 'regular' warships.¹²⁶³

The ability of the Channel Islands privateers to seize a consistently greater number of prizes than any other port (or group of ports) in the British Isles can be explained by the nature of their targets.¹²⁶⁴ Prior to the Peace of Amiens, the Channel Island privateers seized a total of 181 prizes, with much of the credit being granted to vessels fitted out at the expence of the bailiwicks' respective chambers of commerce.¹²⁶⁵ However, only fifteen prizes condemned uncontested to Channel Island captors prior to 1809 were ships-of-war or armed merchantmen;¹²⁶⁶ the vast majority of the remainder were fishing vessels and unarmed coastal traders.¹²⁶⁷ As shall be demonstrated in the investigation of the Channel blockade, this should not distract from the importance of such seizures from a strategic perspective (see chapter seven), however, it must be remembered that the rules for the condemnation of vessels were not favourable to the privateers. While the captain of a privateer or letter-of-marque vessel had to prove *active participation* in the seizure of the enemy vessel, the captain of a ship-of-war or hired vessel need only prove that they had been *in sight* of a capture in order to be entitled to a share in the prize.¹²⁶⁸ Consequently, while the Anglo-Irish MP Edmund Burke may have compared the Channel Islands

¹²⁶² TNA, ADM 1/6032, Intelligence Received on March 24th 1794

¹²⁶³ SJA, L/A/38/A1, Entry for August 30th 1800

¹²⁶⁴ Of the 284 prizes condemned to Channel Island vessels during the Seven Years War and the War of the Austrian Succession, only nineteen (6.7%) were corsairs; and fifty-seven (20.1%) were ships armed *en guerre et marchandises* (possessing a letter-of-marque)

¹²⁶⁵ SJA, L/A/38/A1, Letter to Unnamed Recipient, August 30th 1800; and TNA, WO 55/1549/6, Doyle's Report re. Guernsey and Alderney' undated

¹²⁶⁶ Meyer, 'The Channel Island Privateers', pp. 180-182

¹²⁶⁷ Raban, 'Pierre Labey', 319

¹²⁶⁸ C. Van Bynkershoek, P.S. DuPonceau, (trans.), J. Perkovich (ed.), *A Treatise on the Rule of War*, (Clake, New Jersey, 1810) p. 145

privateers to 'a Second Rate Navy',¹²⁶⁹ the reality was that captains of Royal Navy vessels were quick to challenge a privateer captain's claim to exclusive right to a capture.¹²⁷⁰ Likewise, while the local authorities may have perceived the Channel Island privateers as being able to act in concert with the Royal Navy for the benefit of the nation,¹²⁷¹ the privateers themselves were often seen as a hindrance by the latter's officers. Not only did they provide serious competition for prize-money – one of the few genuine attractions for joining the Royal Navy¹²⁷² – but the privateers were also resented because of the often violent manner in which the crews resisted impressment, particularly in the case of Channel Islands' crews.¹²⁷³ Furthermore, it was by no means uncommon for privateer captains to supplement their sporadic success by illegal means: either by operating under invalid letters of marque,¹²⁷⁴ involvement in the smuggling trade,¹²⁷⁵ or by committing acts of piracy.¹²⁷⁶

'The Tale of the Tape': Size and Armament

As has already been said, the bailiwicks possessed neither the resources nor logistics to fit out any vessels to compare with the 300-ton ships deployed by *armateurs* in ports such as Bristol¹²⁷⁷ or Bordeaux;¹²⁷⁸ however, such vessels might occasionally be acquired by capture or purchase. Perhaps the best

¹²⁶⁹ Podger, *Nest of Vypers*, p. 168

¹²⁷⁰ Meyer, 'The Channel Island Privateers', p. 182

¹²⁷¹ TNA, HO 98/24, Thomas Dundas to David Dundas, March 12th 1793

¹²⁷² Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 10

¹²⁷³ TNA, ADM 1/222, Dobrée to Saumarez, June 19th 1803; and GSG, A/IV/80/16, 'Correspondence Relating to the 'Violent Outrage' Committed against *HMS Hazard* by a Privateer of the Island of Guernsey', June 1803

¹²⁷⁴ TNA, HCA 32/1423/1802, 'Contested Cause, Captured Ship: *Frederica and Mary-Ann*', undated

¹²⁷⁵ SROI, SA 3/1/3, Don to Saumarez, March 7th 1808 and Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and Smuggling', p. 213

¹²⁷⁶ TNA, FO 95/612/45, D'Auvergne to St. Vincent, September 21st 1800 and SJA, L/A/38/A1, Entry for September 22nd 1800

¹²⁷⁷ TNA, HCA 26/6/11, 'Letter of Marque for the *Caesar* Privateer of Bristol', September 22nd 1756 and HCA 26/7/164, 'Letter of Marque for the *Tyger* Privateer of Bristol', July 5th 1757

¹²⁷⁸ Hood to Warren, August 30th 1800, reproduced in Morriss, *The Channel Fleet*, p. 555

example from the Great French War is the 486-ton privateer *L’Invention*: a French vessel captured by the British on its first cruise and sold to Carteret Priaulx at a prize auction, she had been built in May 1801, and carried a total of twelve 12-pdr and four 9-pdr guns.¹²⁷⁹ Yet this was an exceptional case: even the 108-ton *Neptune* – one of the largest of the Channel Island vessels – mounted only 4-pdr and 6-pdr guns,¹²⁸⁰ and few British privateers, of any size, ordinarily mounted ordnance significantly larger than a 12-pdr gun or 12-pdr carronade.¹²⁸¹ As for the French, while their *armateurs* were occasionally able to fit out exceptionally large vessels such as the *Napoléon* (one brass 40-pdr, twenty-five 32-pdr carronades), the reality was that vessels such as *Bougainville* (ten 6-pdrs, two 4-pdrs, ten swivels) were far more typical.¹²⁸² Moreover, the bulk of enemy privateers were little different from their Channel Island counterparts, being designed to prey upon fishing vessels and coastal traders, not engage in broadside-to-broadside confrontations with warships.¹²⁸³

Indeed, if a sample is taken of the French privateers captured over the course of the war – regardless of whether they fell victim to the Channel Islands’ privateers or to other vessels – it is clear that a significant proportion would have posed little real danger to the *mauvaises corsairs de Jersey et Guernsey*. The *Annual Register*, for example, lists several vessels which seem scarcely better armed than Jersey’s diminutive ‘cockleshell’ privateers:¹²⁸⁴ *Le Cerberre* (six long guns), *Neptune* (four long guns), *L’inattendu* (two long guns), *Le*

¹²⁷⁹ Jamieson (ed.), ‘*A People of the Sea*’, p. xv

¹²⁸⁰ SJA, L/C/60/E5/5, ‘Letter of Marque for the Privateer *Neptune*’, May 16th 1800

¹²⁸¹ Meyer, ‘The Channel Island Privateers’, p. 176

¹²⁸² Crowhurst, ‘Experience, Skill and Luck’, p. 166

¹²⁸³ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, pp. 9-10

¹²⁸⁴ A truly accurate comparison is, however, impossible, since the calibre of guns mounted by each vessel is not listed.

Vengeur (two swivel guns) and *La Pluton* (one long gun).¹²⁸⁵ Furthermore, the existence of privateers such as *L'Éclair*, *Le Troisième Ferrailleur* and *L'Inconnu* demonstrate that many French *corsairs* placed a far greater reliance on volume of firepower rather than weight of shot. Of the thirty-two guns mounted by *L'Éclair*, twenty of these were 1½-pdr swivel guns, and the remaining twelve were only 6-pdr long guns.¹²⁸⁶ Similarly, although both *Le Troisième Ferrailleur* and *L'Inconnu* mounted fourteen guns each, these comprised twelve 4-pdr long guns and two 12-pdr carronades in the case of the former,¹²⁸⁷ and twelve 4-pdr long guns and two 8-pdr long guns in the case of the latter.¹²⁸⁸

In terms of size, the Channel Islands privateers also appear to have been larger on average than their French counterparts: of the fourteen *corsairs* captured by the former between 1793 and 1814, these ranged in size from the *Amité* (60 tons) and *Hirondelle* (80 tons) to the *Sans Peur* (13 tons), *Courageux* (15 tons), *Ajax* (17 tons) and *Bonne Éspérance* (18 tons).¹²⁸⁹ More importantly, even though the Channel Islands deployed an average of only seventeen privateers per annum during the course of the Great French War,¹²⁹⁰ many of the French *corsair* fleets appear to have suffered similar patterns of 'boom' and 'bust' with respect to their numbers. Jersey, for example, sent out ten privateers in 1798 and sixteen in 1800, but this figure fell to only seven vessels in 1803 and just two in 1805;¹²⁹¹ a trend which can be seen to have been likewise experienced in St. Malo. Unfortunately, the records for the latter port are rendered less accurate by the fact that we have access only to the number of vessels

¹²⁸⁵ Anon, *The New Annual Register, or General Repository of History, Politics and Literature for the Year 1800* (London, 1801) pp. 12, 17, and 28

¹²⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 46

¹²⁸⁷ *The New Annual Register...for the Year 1800*, p. 28

¹²⁸⁸ *Gazette de L'Isle de Guernesey*, April 2nd 1814

¹²⁸⁹ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 72

¹²⁹⁰ Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise*

¹²⁹¹ Podger, *Nest of Vypers*, p. 163

registered, not the number of vessels that embarked on cruises, but the overall picture remains useful. While thirty-one privateers were registered in St. Malo between September 1796 and September 1797, this fell to only ten between September 1802 and September 1803; similarly, between 1807 and 1813, the number of privateer registrations fell from twenty-five to thirteen.¹²⁹²

The Privateers as an Instrument of Psychological Warfare

From this analysis, it is clear to see that the French and Channel Islands Privateers were largely comparable: however, it must be remembered that their principal role was not to fight a protracted gunnery duel, but to disrupt and intimidate enemy commercial traffic.¹²⁹³ Indeed, the French example proves that commerce raiders did not have to be numerous in order to have a powerful influence over enemy tactics; few of the *corsairs* were at sea at any one time, yet they encouraged widespread fear amongst British merchantmen.¹²⁹⁴ In the Channel Islands too, it was reported that the local fishing fleet experienced frequent raids by a large fleet of very small vessels,¹²⁹⁵ while local merchants issued frequent demands for convoy protection as a result of the threat of the Malouin *corsairs*.¹²⁹⁶ Likewise, a report submitted by Saumarez in June 1803 revealed that 'in consequence of the numbers of privateers fitting for sea in the ports of St. Malo and Cherbourg [he had] found it necessary to station all the small vessels under my orders to cruise to intercept them'.¹²⁹⁷ In addition to actual incidences of attack, repeated scouting of the various ports along the

¹²⁹² Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, pp. 21-22

¹²⁹³ Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, p. 268

¹²⁹⁴ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, pp. 46-47; and Meyer, 'The Channel Island Privateers', p. 183

¹²⁹⁵ TNA, HO 69/12/9, Dalrymple to D'Auvergne, June 21st 1797

¹²⁹⁶ TNA, HO 69/17/43, De St. Croix to D'Auvergne, March 25th 1797; and HO 69/4, Nepean to D'Auvergne, April 8th 1797

¹²⁹⁷ SROI, SA 3/1/7/18, Saumarez to the Admiralty, June 7th 1803

Breton-Norman coast revealed a high level of activity. In February 1793, eight privateers were fitting out at Cherbourg, totalling 214 tons burthen and carrying 58 swivels and 28 long guns between them,¹²⁹⁸ while in June 1796, twelve privateers were sighted at Dunkirk, each mounting twelve to twenty guns.¹²⁹⁹

In light of these intelligence reports, it is necessary to ‘focus on how resources are used, with all that this means in terms of issues of fighting quality, unit cohesion, morale, leadership, tactics, strategy and other factors’.¹³⁰⁰ As Black has observed, psychology has a considerable role to play in analysing this aspect of military history, and while it has been demonstrated that privateers inflicted considerable damage in economic terms through the taking of prizes, their value as a ‘terror weapon’ should not be overlooked.¹³⁰¹ This was particularly true of the French *corsairs* in the wake of Trafalgar, since in addition to Napoleon’s considerable investment in the rebuilding of his navy,¹³⁰² Britain’s commercial traffic remained a tempting target for those French privateers which proved able – all too often – to slip the British blockade.¹³⁰³ Between 1809 to 1814, it is estimated that ‘1,674 convoys sailed to and from England, protecting 57,448 voyages of merchant ships and government-hired transports’,¹³⁰⁴ and it is evident that the *guerre de course* remained a central element of the French maritime strategy. Indeed, *armateurs* such as Robert Surcouf – in spite of the highly variable success in terms of prize-taking (see above) – continued to

¹²⁹⁸ TNA, HO 98/41, ‘List of Privateers Fitting Out at or Belonging to Cherbourg’, February 15th 1793

¹²⁹⁹ TNA, ADM 1/6033, ‘Extract of Information Communicated by D’Auvergne’, June 23rd 1796

¹³⁰⁰ Black, *Military History*, p. 9

¹³⁰¹ Crowhurst, ‘Experience, Skill and Luck’, p. 165

¹³⁰² Davey, *In Nelson’s Wake*, p. 278

¹³⁰³ SJA, L/F/95/A/2, Don to Spencer, May 22nd 1806; and L/F/95/B/9, Don to ‘My Dear Sir’, October 27th 1811

¹³⁰⁴ Knight, ‘British Defensive Strategy at Sea’, p. 91

advocate for commerce-raiding as a tactic which might yet force Britain to submit, or at least sue for a negotiated peace.¹³⁰⁵

Indeed, while Duffy is correct in summarising the *guerre de course* as being a strategy which ‘at times cut deep inroads into British commerce, [but] never bit hard enough to bring Britain to its knees’,¹³⁰⁶ the French *corsairs* continued to exert considerable pressure on ‘weak links’ in Britain’s mercantile marine. This stroke fell particularly hard upon the Channel Islands, and especially during the winter months, when it was hardest for an effective blockade to be maintained over the Norman ports from which most of the *corsairs* operated.¹³⁰⁷ In October and November 1807, the Malouin and Granville privateers were reported as especially active,¹³⁰⁸ while records for 1810 and 1811 shows the diversity of the ships targeted. During this period, the *Coursier* of St. Malo captured the 100-ton brig *Belle Ann* of Jersey, bound for Madeira with a cargo of dry cod, apples and brandy,¹³⁰⁹ while an unnamed privateer attacked the *Chesterfield* packet between Guernsey and Weymouth.¹³¹⁰ A third enemy vessel – a cutter which had ‘approached flying English colours’ – attacked the hired cutter *Queen Charlotte* while it was carrying dispatches relating to the blockade of Cherbourg,¹³¹¹ and the *Chesterfield* packet was attacked again in November 1811, being taken in the Race of Alderney.¹³¹²

¹³⁰⁵ Warner, *The British Navy*, p. 115

¹³⁰⁶ Duffy, ‘Foundations of British Naval Power’, p. 81

¹³⁰⁷ TNA, HO 98/15, Don to Ryder, February 28th 1810

¹³⁰⁸ SJA, L/F/95/A/22, ‘Don to Doyle Concerning Intelligence Received from France, Relating to the Troops, Supplies and Boats’, October 2nd 1807; and L/F/95/A/25, Don to Doyle, November 24th 1807

¹³⁰⁹ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 71

¹³¹⁰ SJA, LSF C397.5, Bib Ref: 326760, ‘From ‘*The Jersey Magazine or Monthly Recorder*’, July 1810’

¹³¹¹ Ibid, August 1810

¹³¹² SJA, A/A1/6, Letter of November 6th 1811

In light of this change in French tactics, one great advantage offered by the Channel Islands privateers in the post-Trafalgar era was their ability to carry out reprisal attacks in response to the *guerre de course*. Quite apart from the above-mentioned weakness in the blockade, it was also impossible for the Royal Navy to maintain a comprehensive watch on the open sea, and any vessel(s) which slipped the net (see chapter seven) would give little indication as to their destination.¹³¹³ Prior to the development of the radio telegraph, it was possible for a privateer to operate for weeks in a 'fertile spot' without detection, as long as they continued to be successful in preventing the escape of their prey.¹³¹⁴ This enabled the Channel Islands privateers to act as additional 'eyes' of Britain's naval forces,¹³¹⁵ and supplement the Royal Navy's force of hired civilian vessels,¹³¹⁶ several of which were likewise hired from members of the bailiwicks' merchant companies.¹³¹⁷ Their importance can be shown by examining the record of the Malouin *corsairs*: between 1806 and 1812, St. Malo never had less than fifteen privateers registered in any year, and a total of 112 prizes were captured or ransomed at a cost of only sixty-four of their own number.¹³¹⁸ Moreover, the city appears to have continued to prosper through privateering ventures during this period, the prizes taken by its *corsairs* between October 1806 and May 1814 bringing in a net profit of 14,021,365 *LF*.

¹³¹³ Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture, 1760-1850: Public Trust and Government Ideology* (Aldershot, 2004) p. 23

¹³¹⁴ Wilden, *Theories of Maritime Strategy*, p. 145

¹³¹⁵ Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, p. 117

¹³¹⁶ R. Morriss, *The Foundations of British Maritime Ascendancy* (Cambridge, 2011) pp. 325-326

¹³¹⁷ SJA, A/C7/1, 'Memorandum of Agreement between Lt-Col. Francis Incedon and Messrs Atkinson, Mure, and Bogle on Behalf of the Copper-Bottomed Ship *Peggy*', September 6th 1794

¹³¹⁸ Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, pp. 19-20

An Uneasy Alliance: The Privateers and the Royal Navy

In terms of their being able to assist the Royal Navy in competing for and maintaining control of the seas, the Channel Island vessels possessed one key tactical advantage over the naval vessels with which they worked. Although almost all small privateers were of shallow draught and light construction,¹³¹⁹ rendering them ideal for pursuing isolated enemies into coastal or littoral waters (see chapter seven), the Channel Island privateer captains were also veterans of the local smuggling trade,¹³²⁰ and were described as having an intimate knowledge of 'every creek, inlet and bay in which an enemy might seek to hide'.¹³²¹ As such, these vessels were of considerable value to the Royal Navy as scouts, and while D'Auvergne's cruisers regularly reconnoitred the enemy ports – principally St. Malo, Solidor, Cancale, Granville, St. Germain, Portbail, Carteret, Violette and Cherbourg¹³²² – both Don and Doyle were active in hiring armed cutters and luggers to augment his force.¹³²³ Indeed, while we can only speculate as to how many of these hired vessels had been previously used as privateers, it would certainly be naïve to suggest that they had not. Even if a vessel in possession of a letter-of-marque was hired by the Royal Navy, it would seem that the vessel was permitted to continue to operate under those same terms whenever it was not conducting naval business.

Similarly, when cruising in local waters, the Channel Islands' privateers greatly outperformed their Royal Navy counterparts in terms of their knowledge of the

¹³¹⁹ Black, *Britain as a Military Power*, p. 7

¹³²⁰ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 70

¹³²¹ SJA, L/F/08/A/15, 'Moirs to Balcarres Regarding the Importance of Communication with the Royalists', December 3rd 1793

¹³²² SJA, L/F/95/B/9, Don to 'My Dear Sir', October 27th 1811

¹³²³ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of July 7th 1806

hazardous tides, currents and reefs which screened the approaches to the Islands. As has been already mentioned (see chapter three), these natural barriers had served to disrupt the attempted invasions of 1778 and 1781, but they could be just as hazardous to friendly ships. Several vessels on both sides were lost in the Race of Alderney,¹³²⁴ and ultimately, the level of skill required when negotiating many of the shallows and channels around the Islands could be acquired only after many years at sea.¹³²⁵ However, for all the advantages which the Channel Islands privateers brought to the British in strategic terms, it could well be argued that the willingness of the Royal Navy to cooperate with them was little more than a 'marriage of convenience'.¹³²⁶ In the eyes of both the Admiralty and many serving officers, privateers came to be resented both for their competing with the Navy over prizes and for their apparent luring of trained seamen away from the Service. This issue was even more keenly felt in the Channel Islands since, as has been already mentioned, the constitutional position of the Bailiwicks (see chapter one) rendered native inhabitants immune from impressment.¹³²⁷

As has been increasingly highlighted in recent scholarship, no aspect of the history of the Royal Navy during the Great French War is less accurately depicted or more poorly understood than that of the means employed by the Royal Navy and the British government to recruit its seamen.¹³²⁸ Post-war reformist literature often depicted members of the press gang as 'oversized,

¹³²⁴ Jamieson, 'The Return to Privateering', p. 227

¹³²⁵ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of January 2nd 1807

¹³²⁶ Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, p. 96

¹³²⁷ St. Vincent to Lord Grey de Howick, June 20th 1803 and July 11th 1803, reproduced in D. Bonner Smith (ed.), *Letters of Admiral of the Fleet the Earl of St. Vincent whilst First Lord of the Admiralty 1801-1804*, 2 Vols (London, 1927) Vol. II, pp. 313-315

¹³²⁸ J. Dancy, 'British Naval Administration, pp. 49 and 54; and N. Slope, 'Serving in Nelson's Navy: A Social History of Three *Amazon*-Class Frigates Utilising Database Technology, 1798-1811' PhD Thesis, (University of West London, 2006) pp. 4-5

brutal men...under the direction of a sadistic lieutenant'¹³²⁹ who 'rampaged through port towns, indiscriminately snatching able-bodied men',¹³³⁰ and were 'as ready to cut a throat as eat their breakfast'.¹³³¹ Likewise, the traditional image of the Quota Acts portrays the local authorities as having resorted to 'clearing out the jails', and causing ships' companies to be 'infected' with tramps, beggars, idlers, gaolbirds, social misfits and riffraff'.¹³³² Consequently, the proportion of pressed men serving in the Royal Navy during the Great French War has long been overestimated – Lewis having given a figure as high as fifty percent¹³³³ – but this has been challenged in more recent years by both Dancy and Slope. According to the former, the press gang accounted for only sixteen percent of British seamen who served between 1793 and 1801,¹³³⁴ and only twenty-seven percent of those who served during 1801;¹³³⁵ while the latter's study of three *Amazon*-class frigates during 1798-1811 resulted in an estimate of thirty-six percent.¹³³⁶

However, even if the nature and the extent of the Royal Navy's reliance upon impressment may have been exaggerated, it should not be assumed that a majority of reports of violence relating to the press gang were 'embellished' or fabricated wholesale by liberal reformers.¹³³⁷ In 1803 alone, reports emerged of at least 'seventy-five riots and affrays' as a direct result of press gang activity, with particularly violent encounters taking place at Barking, Newcastle and

¹³²⁹ J. Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang: Volunteers, Impressment and the Naval Manpower Problem of the Late Eighteenth Century* (Woodbridge, 2015) pp. 63 and 120

¹³³⁰ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 22

¹³³¹ Williams, *History of the Liverpool Privateers*, pp. 320-321

¹³³² C.P. Kindleberger, *Mariners and Markets* (London, 1992) and M. Lewis, *A Social History of the Navy: 1793-1815* (London, 1960) cited in Slope, 'Serving in Nelson's Navy', p. 95

¹³³³ Lewis, *Social History of the Navy*, cited in Duffy, 'The Foundations of British Naval Power', p. 70

¹³³⁴ Dancy, 'British Naval Administration', p. 54

¹³³⁵ Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang*, p. 147

¹³³⁶ Slope, 'Serving in Nelson's Navy', p. 170

¹³³⁷ Dancy, *The Myth of the Press Gang*, pp. 63 and 136

Sunderland, as well as at Portland Bill, whereafter two lieutenants were court-martialled – and acquitted – of willful murder.¹³³⁸ Likewise, while allegations of false impressment of sailors from the Channel Islands appear to have been a common occurrence during the Great French War,¹³³⁹ attempts to circumvent the Islanders' 'special relationship' had been recorded as early as the American War of Independence.¹³⁴⁰ Moreover, since the mechanism of impressment was designed to recruit skilled seamen,¹³⁴¹ it is unsurprising that the high rate of volunteering amongst Channel Islanders failed to convince desperate captains that the inhabitants were conspiring to deny them access to a vital source of experienced mariners.¹³⁴² Indeed, many naval officers also suspected the Channel Islands of being employed as a place of refuge for 'hundreds of British seamen who resort thither [to] take advantage of the indulgence shewn to the inhabitants [with respect to impressment]'.¹³⁴³

Fortunately, the authorities in the Channel Islands openly acknowledged the fact that the permeability of their borders made the bailiwicks a haven for deserters from both branches of the British armed forces. In order to assist the Royal Navy, a bounty of 20s was awarded by the States of Jersey for each man brought in,¹³⁴⁴ while D'Auvergne declared that no vessel should be considered as having 'reasonable objection...to being visited for deserters',¹³⁴⁵ and that all

¹³³⁸ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 23; and Duffy, 'The Foundations of British Naval Power', p. 69

¹³³⁹ TNA, FO 95/612/17, D'Auvergne to Nepean, July 29th 1799; SROI, SA 3/1/7/18, Saumarez to Nepean, June 3rd 1803; SA 3/1/7/20, Nepean to Saumarez, April 23rd 1806; and TNA, ADM 1/226, Commander, *HMS Albacore*, to D'Auvergne, January 8th 1811

¹³⁴⁰ TNA, FO 95/612/14, Lord Weymouth to Lieutenant-Governor of Jersey, January 19th 1778, enclosed in D'Auvergne to the Board of Admiralty, June 24th 1799

¹³⁴¹ Dancy, 'British Naval Administration', pp. 56 and 62

¹³⁴² St. Vincent to Lord Grey de Howick, May 24th, June 20th and July 11th 1803, reproduced in Bonner Smith (ed.), *Letters of Earl St. Vincent*, Vol. II, pp. 314-315

¹³⁴³ St. Vincent to Lord Grey de Howick, April 25th 1803, reproduced in *Ibid*, p. 286

¹³⁴⁴ SJA, F/M/R1/33, 'Notice from the Royal Court Asking for Islanders to Come Forward to Reveal the Whereabouts of Members of the Armed Forces of Britain Hiding in the Island', April 14th 1803

¹³⁴⁵ TNA, FO 95/612/38, D'Auvergne to Nepean, August 19th 1800

vessels calling at Jersey should be searched.¹³⁴⁶ Furthermore, a considerable number of deserters were discovered to have taken refuge in the Islands after having fled either from transports or from garrisons in Britain,¹³⁴⁷ with several such men re-enlisting in the comparatively 'safe' regiments posted to garrison duty in the bailiwicks.¹³⁴⁸ However, while the British authorities may have been wholly within their rights to attempt to recover these men, it is evident that the Channel Islanders remained anxious of the possibility that unscrupulous naval officers might take advantage of the situation as offering an ideal cover for illegal impressment operations. Ultimately, the begrudging respect shown by the Royal Navy to the Channel Islands' *de jure* immunity from impressment¹³⁴⁹ meant that violent clashes were far less frequent than in Britain, but attempts to recover deserters often served as flashpoints for disturbances.

With respect to local violence in relation to impressment, one of the most prominent examples is provided by the 'violent outrage' committed in June 1803 by the crew of the *Union* privateer of Guernsey against Captain Dobrée and the officers and men of *HMS Hazard*.¹³⁵⁰ After the former had failed to heave to and submit to a search, the latter had fired several warning shots and chased her into St. Peter Port;¹³⁵¹ however, upon boarding the privateer, Captain Dobrée and his officers were attacked with 'pieces of wood and iron', and their boat was hauled ashore and burned.¹³⁵² Moreover, when Dobrée sought to bring charges against the ringleaders of the riot, he himself was brought before the Royal

¹³⁴⁶ TNA, FO 95/612/14, D'Auvergne to the Board of Admiralty, June 24th 1799

¹³⁴⁷ SJA, A/A1/3, Letters of January 23rd 1810 and September 16th 1810

¹³⁴⁸ Ibid, Letter of February 10th 1810 and A/A1/4, Letter of May 3rd 1811

¹³⁴⁹ St. Vincent to Lord Grey de Howick, April 25th 1803, reproduced in Bonner Smith (ed.), *Letters of Earl St. Vincent*, Vol. II, p. 286

¹³⁵⁰ SROI, SA 3/1/7/18, Nepean to Saumarez, June 6th 1803

¹³⁵¹ N. Rogers, *The Press Gang: Naval Impressment and its Opponents in Georgian Britain* (London, 2007) p. 58

¹³⁵² GSG, A/IV/80/16, 'Correspondence between Captain Dobrée, Sir James Saumarez and the Admiralty', June 1803

Court on a charge of 'violating the privileges of the Island', and fined a total of £30 before bail was posted.¹³⁵³ A similar incident had occurred in June 1799, when Captain Lord Proby of *HMS Danaë* (sloop, 20 guns) had endeavoured to conduct a search of a Guernsey privateer for 'known deserters'. Not only did he come under fire from the vessel while approaching and find himself 'treated with gross insults', but the Island's 'civil police' proved to be 'intimately connected with the privateers' and 'chose to interpret the visit of the *Danaë*'s boat as intended to impress their crews'.¹³⁵⁴

The Final Assessment

Although those officers who found themselves reliant upon impressment to maintain a full complement for their ships may have looked upon privateers as draining valuable manpower away from the Fleet, it cannot be denied that these civilian commerce raiders performed an essential service. This was particularly true during the years following Trafalgar, when Napoleon relied increasingly on privateering as a means to restrict Britain's supply lines;¹³⁵⁵ in 1807 alone, some 559 British vessels were lost to the *corsairs*, while in 1810, this figure peaked at over 600 ships.¹³⁵⁶ In addition to adopting the convoy system as a counter to these predations (see chapter seven), the Royal Navy also made a 'vigorous attempt to check enemy privateering activity at source', and her frigates enjoyed particular success with respect to capturing enemy *corsairs* operating in the vicinity of Cherbourg and Ushant.¹³⁵⁷ However, in order to 'take the war into French coastal waters', it was necessary to rely on the combined

¹³⁵³ TNA, ADM 1/222, Dobrée to Saumarez, June 19th 1803

¹³⁵⁴ TNA, FO 95/612/14, D'Auvergne to the Board of Admiralty, June 24th 1799

¹³⁵⁵ Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent', 311

¹³⁵⁶ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, pp. 232-233

¹³⁵⁷ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, pp. 67-68

efforts of the Channel Island privateers and the small naval vessels commanded by D'Auvergne and Saumarez (see chapter seven). Indeed, while it is true that relatively few enemy ships were captured in comparison to the actual number that set sail, and that convoys proved a far more effective form of protecting British trade,¹³⁵⁸ this should not lead us to dismiss the privateers' importance within British naval strategy.

As will be demonstrated through the discussion of the Channel blockade (see chapter seven), control of enemy trade was one of the most important, but also one of the most difficult, objectives facing the Royal Navy,¹³⁵⁹ since a sustained blockade placed a heavy operational toll on a large number of vessels. While it is true that ships such as *HMS Victory* were 'long-term' investments for the Navy – Nelson's flagship first saw action at Ushant in 1778, and between 1808 and 1812, served as Saumarez' flagship in the Baltic – their construction and maintenance consumed a vast quantity of resources. A third-rate 74-gun ship like *HMS Triumph* (1764) required 3,028 loads¹³⁶⁰ of timber, while a first-rate 100-gun ship like *HMS Royal George* (1756) required 5,760 loads,¹³⁶¹ and much of this seasoned wood was imported from Germany, Scandinavia and the Baltic.¹³⁶² Unfortunately, the complementary duties of blockade and convoy were tedious, monotonous and often thankless tasks, with little opportunity for advancement or promotion;¹³⁶³ thus, although rich prizes were exceptional, the prospect of glory and wealth often tempted frigate captains to neglect their more

¹³⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 73

¹³⁵⁹ Starkey, 'A Restless Spirit', p. 128

¹³⁶⁰ One 'load' = Fifty cubic feet.

¹³⁶¹ R.A. Church, *Depletion of the Sylvian Sea: Seventeenth Century English Shipbuilding*, (Online, United States of America, 2008) p. 25

¹³⁶² R. Morriss, *The Royal Dockyards during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars*, (Leicester, 1983) pp. 73-74; and Morieux, 'Diplomacy from Below', 90

¹³⁶³ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, pp. 38 and 72

'mundane' duties in favour of 'prize hunting'.¹³⁶⁴ By contrast, the privateers relied solely upon prize-taking as a means to turn a profit from their ventures: thus, their entire time at sea was devoted to searching for and engaging with the enemy, or – as more often the case – retaking captured vessels that were en-route to French ports under prize crews.¹³⁶⁵

Indeed, while it is true that the Channel Islands privateers were prolific in the taking of prizes, it is necessary in summing up to highlight that a considerable number were friendly ships re-taken from the enemy. According to the records of Parisian *armateurs*, the period from 1803 onwards saw as many as 75% of their prizes being recaptured before they reached the safety of the French coast,¹³⁶⁶ and the 'tugs of war' which could ensue over individual prizes was considerable. One of the most extreme cases occurred in July 1803, when the Dutchman *Jacobina*, carrying a cargo of sugar, cotton and coffee, was seized by the Guernsey privateer *Friends Goodwill*. Only three days later, while being sent to the St. Peter Port under a prize crew, she was re-captured by the French corvette *L'Adventure*, who attempted to escort the vessel back to St. Malo. However, both of the vessels were intercepted by *HMS Rosario* (sixth-rate, 20 guns), with *L'Adventure* abandoning her prize, and allowing *Jacobina* to be brought into a British port.¹³⁶⁷ As for their ability to counteract the threat of French *corsairs*, there is no doubt that the Islanders did enjoy some success in this regard, even though this was a task which more usually fell to the more powerful warships of the Channel Squadron.¹³⁶⁸

¹³⁶⁴ Duffy, 'The Foundations of British Naval Power', p. 65

¹³⁶⁵ Fay, *Channel Islands and Newfoundland*, p. 38

¹³⁶⁶ Marzagalli, *French Privateering*, p. 48

¹³⁶⁷ TNA, HCA 32/1506/3082, 'J3082 Contested Cause. Captured Ship: *Jacobina* of Amsterdam', undated

¹³⁶⁸ TNA, FO 95/612/27, Nick Wray, Commanding *Aristocrat*, to D'Auvergne, January 8th 1800

Consequently, while British merchants may have genuinely feared that ‘swarms of French privateers were hovering off the British coast’,¹³⁶⁹ much of the threat was in fact neutralised. In terms of a direct comparison, it is useful once again to draw on the cases of Jersey and St. Malo, the two ports for which statistics are most readily available. Crowhurst records that French *corsair* activity peaked in 1797 during the Revolutionary War, and again in 1807-8 during the Napoleonic War,¹³⁷⁰ with the *Malouins* capturing or ransoming a total of sixty-four prizes for the loss of only twenty-seven ships. As for the Jersey privateers, it can be seen that these inflicted a vastly disproportionate level of damage upon the French mercantile fleet; often because of the fact that enemy crews are recorded as having abandoned their vessels rather than risking a protracted gunnery duel.¹³⁷¹ In 1798, for example, only ten Jersey vessels are recorded as having embarked on cruises, but they captured twenty-nine prizes totalling 1,400 tons burthen, while in 1800 – Jersey’s busiest year – saw sixteen privateers deployed and twenty-five prizes taken, totalling about 1,500 tons burthen.¹³⁷² However, it must be remembered that the Islanders’ fortunes varied significantly from vessel to vessel: in 1793, for example, *Alligator* (Philippe Hamon), captured six French ships totalling 450 tons, while the *Hazard* (Elie Messervy) took no prizes.¹³⁷³

Finally, while it is impossible to know the true monetary value of the prizes seized by the local privateers without extensive analysis of the HCA records¹³⁷⁴ – something which is far beyond the scope allowed by this thesis – the

¹³⁶⁹ Crowhurst, *The Defence of British Trade*, pp. 21-22

¹³⁷⁰ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 31

¹³⁷¹ Meyer, ‘The Channel Island Privateers’, p. 186

¹³⁷² Podger, *Nest of Vypers*, pp. 163-164

¹³⁷³ *Ibid*, p. 162

¹³⁷⁴ Meyer, ‘The Channel Island Privateers’, p. 193

importance of their operations should not be easily dismissed. While it is true that 'sporadic attack could never be so efficient as an organised system of operation',¹³⁷⁵ the activities of the Channel Island *corsairs* – like those of their counterparts from British ports – can be seen nonetheless as having contributed significantly to the success of the war at sea. In spite of perceived competition over prize money and allegations of their diverting experienced seamen from naval service,¹³⁷⁶ the privateers' 'predatory war' was viewed by St. Vincent as having produced 'an incredible effect' upon the enemy.¹³⁷⁷ Indeed, their captains and crews often provided crucial information relating to enemy preparations: either by passing on reports of their own observations to naval vessels,¹³⁷⁸ or by bringing in small groups of prisoners for interrogation by the military authorities.¹³⁷⁹ More importantly, their ability to prey upon the entire French coast from Dunkirk to Bordeaux¹³⁸⁰ not only reinforced their reputation as 'the despair of France', but also permitted the Channel Islands' privateers to play an active role in the local naval blockade.

¹³⁷⁵ Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, p. 97

¹³⁷⁶ GSG, A/IV/80/16, *Acada* off Spithead, April 17th 1803

¹³⁷⁷ St. Vincent to Spencer, June 26th 1800, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. III, pp. 247-248

¹³⁷⁸ SJA, A/A5/2, Letter of January 15th 1809 and GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letter of March 29th 1808

¹³⁷⁹ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to Lieutenant Norris, March 7th 1800; and L/A/38/A1, Entry for August 31st 1801

¹³⁸⁰ TNA, WO 1/391, 'Abstract of Monsieur Hamelin's Report', June 27th 1793

Chapter Seven – Making and Breaking the Blockade

While it is evident that the Channel Islands remained ‘a safe haven for privateers and a smugglers’ paradise’¹³⁸¹ and that the local commerce-raiders enjoyed considerable success (see chapter six), it would be a mistake to focus on the privateers alone as an instrument of economic warfare. As Crowhurst observed, the waters around the Channel Islands proved fruitful hunting-ground for vessels of the Royal Navy; fifteen enemy *corsairs* being taken by them near Guernsey, two off Jersey, two off the Casquets, two near Alderney and one off Chausey.¹³⁸² Likewise, the early years of the war witnessed several successful frigate engagements in the Channel and the Western Approaches,¹³⁸³ while Warren fought two successful actions off the Breton coast in 1794, and Strachan inflicted considerable losses on Breton-Norman coastal trade throughout 1795.¹³⁸⁴ Moreover, despite being unable to provide support for large squadrons or safe anchorage for large ships-of-war, the geographic position of the Channel Islands could be readily exploited as a means of enhancing the blockade of the adjacent French coast. Both D’Auvergne and Saumarez frequently deployed their small vessels against the *corsairs* operating out of St. Malo and Granville (see chapter six),¹³⁸⁵ as well as to monitor – and if possible, attack – the large number of convoys which sought safety in the harbours of Brest and Cherbourg.¹³⁸⁶

¹³⁸¹ Platt, *Concise History*, p. 71

¹³⁸² Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 70

¹³⁸³ These included Pellew’s capture of the *Cléopâtre* (frigate, 36 guns) on June 18th 1793, Saumarez’ capture of the *Réunion* (frigate, 36 guns) on October 20th 1793, and Nagle’s capture of *Révolutionnaire* (frigate, 40 guns) on October 21st 1794

¹³⁸⁴ Black, *Britain as a Military Power*, p. 224

¹³⁸⁵ TNA, FO 95/612/44, D’Auvergne to St. Vincent, September 21st 1800 and D’Auvergne to Nepean, May 11th 1801; and SROI, SA 3/1/7/18, ‘Orders to Captains of Vessels on the Guernsey Station’, May 23rd, 24th, 25th and 30th, June 11th and 21st, and July 3rd 1803

¹³⁸⁶ SROI, SA 3/1/2/3, Letter of August 18th 1794; TNA, WO 1/606, Le Mesurier to Dundas, July 7th 1795; and WO 1/605, ‘Extract from Doyle’s Report’, February 6th 1809

Although such considerations were of fundamental importance to blockade warfare, the benefits offered by the Channel Islands did not derive solely from their geographical location. As with the local privateers, the scouts engaged by D'Auvergne (see chapter three) demonstrated a number of advantages over many of the naval vessels posted to the Channel Islands station. Most important within the context of the blockade, these hired craft were able to pursue the enemy into coastal and littoral waters, often leading to their gaining valuable intelligence concerning enemy preparations (see chapter eight). Moreover, the Channel Islanders were valued for their unrivalled knowledge of local waters: in 1795, it was announced that Jersey pilots would receive a bounty for enlisting on board Royal Navy vessels,¹³⁸⁷ while from 1807, all Channel Island pilots were granted both Admiralty commissions and peacetime half-pay.¹³⁸⁸ Indeed, their superiority to other naval pilots had been well-established during the intervening years: Monsieur Le Gallais – appointed to the Jersey signal stations in 1807 (see chapter three) – was reportedly ‘considered by the [local] naval officers as one of the best pilots belonging to this Island’.¹³⁸⁹ Similarly, in an application of May 1803, Saumarez requested Admiralty pilots for vessels cruising Le Havre, St. Marcou, Canceille Bay and St. Malo, but declared that ‘[Guernsey] and Jersey will furnish pilots for the other parts of the station’.¹³⁹⁰

With respect to a demonstration of the advantage which local pilots conferred upon vessels on the Channel Islands station, the best example is provided by the ‘Action of October 20th 1793’, precipitated by Saumarez’ squadron having

¹³⁸⁷ *TNA*, HO 69/3, Nepean to D'Auvergne, July 23rd 1795

¹³⁸⁸ *SJA*, A/A1/2, January 29th 1807

¹³⁸⁹ *Ibid*, Letter of January 2nd 1807

¹³⁹⁰ *SROI*, SA 3/1/7/18, Saumarez to the Admiralty, May 23rd 1803

been intercepted near Guernsey by a superior French force.¹³⁹¹ In order to ensure the escape of his smaller vessels, Saumarez decided to lure the enemy into a chase, and asked his pilot, Jean Breton, if he believed it possible to guide *HMS Crescent* through a 'most dangerous and intricate channel' off Guernsey's western coast, and which had never been navigated by a frigate. The French, fearing that they would run aground, abandoned the pursuit, however, Le Breton – displaying 'a masterpiece of professional skill'¹³⁹² – succeeded in taking Saumarez' vessel through the reef, and was presented with a silver gilt medal by the Lieutenant-Governor.¹³⁹³ Likewise, during a cruise of July 1803, the *lack* of an experienced pilot led Saumarez to abandon an attempt to capture 'a large frigate' then at anchor in the Outer Road at Cherbourg, the hazardous approach to the port being enhanced by 'fog and variable winds'.¹³⁹⁴ However, further proof of the value of the Channel Islands pilots is provided by official reports relating to intelligence-gathering and espionage: in October 1794, for example, 'a mission of confidential service' induced Waugh to 'procure one of the ablest and best-informed pilots that [Alderney] can furnish'.¹³⁹⁵

As advantageous as the Islanders' maritime knowledge may have been to the Royal Navy, the prevalence of local smuggling presented the British government with a serious dilemma. Although the inhabitants might protest that the privileges granted to the Channel Islands under the *Constitutions* rendered such activities legal (see below), they nonetheless threatened to weaken the efficacy of the British Channel blockade. As late as 1813, the London-based

¹³⁹¹ Composition of opposing squadrons, exclusive of escorts: British – *HMS Crescent* (frigate, 36 guns), *HMS Druid* (frigate, 32 guns), *HMS Eurydice* (frigate, 24 guns); French – *Scaevola* (razée, 53 guns), *Brutus* (razée, 53 guns), *Danae* (frigate, 36 guns), *Félicité* (frigate, 36 guns)

¹³⁹² Greenwood, 'James, Lord de Saumarez 1757-1836', pp. 251-252; and Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, Vol. I, pp. 132-134

¹³⁹³ J. Duncan, (ed.), *The Guernsey and Jersey Magazine, Volumes One and Two* (London, 1837) p. 305

¹³⁹⁴ TNA, ADM 1/222, Saumarez to Nepean, July 6th 1803

¹³⁹⁵ TNA, WO 1/606, Waugh to Dundas, October 3rd 1794

merchant Samuel Arbouin complained of the large quantities of contraband French brandy which continued to be landed on the Devon coast by Guernsey smugglers, and further alleged that several 'Bonapartists' had gained sanctuary in the Island by exploiting tenuous claims to 'native' status.¹³⁹⁶ Later that same year, it was reported that Guernsey had become a waypoint for the smuggling of 'silks and other manufacturing', and that Bonaparte's cause was being sorely aided by 'the resultant export of British gold'.¹³⁹⁷ In spite of such frustrations, the latter years of the Great French War nonetheless found the British government able to exploit the smugglers to their own advantage, and particularly in the wake of the Milan and Berlin Decrees. At this time, plans were set in motion to undermine Napoleon's Continental System by recruiting the Channel Islands' smugglers as a force of blockade runners,¹³⁹⁸ a strategy which the Emperor had himself sought to employ.

Finally, while this chapter is intended to demonstrate the strategic value of the Channel Islands as a support for the blockade of the adjacent French coast, it must be emphasised that the nature of such support was in no way comparable to that offered by bases such as Malta. First and foremost, while they offered an ideal base for privateers, scouts and other small craft, the lack of a fortified deep-water harbour and the hazardous nature of local navigation rendered the Channel Islands almost totally inaccessible to large ships-of-war. In addition, although the trans-Atlantic cod trade and privateering were amongst the most significant local employers (see chapter six), local shipbuilding was almost entirely nonexistent during the Great French War, at least in terms of the

¹³⁹⁶ *DHC*, 152M/C/1813/OF/48, Arbouin to Addington, January 8th 1813

¹³⁹⁷ *DHC*, 152M/C/1813/OF/52, Arbouin to Addington, September 25th 1813

¹³⁹⁸ *TNA*, HO 98/41, 'Observations Upon the Proposed Trade To and From the Channel Islands to France' January 1st 1808; and *SJA*, L/F/106/A/2, Don to Doyle, January 7th 1808

services which might be provided in a dedicated shipyard. While Cox has estimated that as many as one hundred shipwrights may have been working in the Channel Islands by 1804,¹³⁹⁹ the bulk of these were engaged in little more than making rudimentary repairs to the vessels anchoring in St. Helier, St. Aubin or St. Peter Port. It was not until the 1820s that the first dedicated shipyards been established in both Jersey and Guernsey, after which the Channel Islands witnessed several decades of rapid expansion, with shipping and shipbuilding emerging as the second-largest employer.¹⁴⁰⁰

The Bailiwicks and the Navy – The Support Available

As was illustrated during the Quiberon Expedition of 1795 (see chapter nine), the most basic requirement of a fleet employed on blockade duty was ease of access to a point of supply. Hoping that this might permit Moira to funnel additional British troops into Quiberon, Warren had set up a blockade of Belleisle; however, he conceded that this position was tenable only if Bridport's fleet could be 'relieved by another, so as to blockade L'Orient'. Similarly, although he was able to replenish his supplies of bread and water from the islands of Houat and Hoëdic, this recourse was described by Warren as being 'insufficient' to sustain his forces, and a lack of beer, meat and other fresh provisions contributed to an outbreak of scurvy.¹⁴⁰¹ Unfortunately, with respect to meeting the needs of a blockading force, this was one area in which the Channel Islands were able to provide only a token level of assistance; at least until after 1808, when Spain's entry into the Peninsular War opened the South

¹³⁹⁹ Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port', p. 298

¹⁴⁰⁰ Crossan, 'Guernsey, 1814-1914', p. 19; and Podger, 'Ship-Building in Jersey', 234-235

¹⁴⁰¹ Warren to Spencer, July 29th and 31st 1795, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. II, pp. 92-94

American markets to Guernsey's merchants.¹⁴⁰² As has been already noted, the Bailiwicks had faced a potential food crisis during the 1790s, and it is reasonable to suggest that only skilled management and the successes of the local privateers prevented the outbreak of riots similar to those witnessed in both Britain and France (see chapters five and six).

Aside from the difficulties of supply and provisioning, the Bailiwicks were also deficient in terms of being able to offer a blockading squadron a base at which to refit and repair. In addition to the abovementioned lack of any shipyards, it was not until 1808 that the harbour of St. Peter Port was deemed sufficiently well fortified as to 'afford a complete shelter and safety to any vessels [caught] in the severe south-easterly gales'.¹⁴⁰³ As for the anchorage at Grouville, while this was 'defended by banks and rocks from most quarters of the compass', the bay was so shallow as to be impractical for the large vessels deployed on blockade duty. Once D'Auvergne's flagship and his flotilla of gunboats were anchored therein, it was estimated that the bay might accommodate no more than 'one [additional] frigate, two ship-sloops and two brigs',¹⁴⁰⁴ meaning that the majority of vessels under Saumarez' command remained exposed in Guernsey Roads.¹⁴⁰⁵ Even so, his squadron remained a significant threat to the French:¹⁴⁰⁶ in 1804, for example, *HMS Cerberus* intercepted a convoy bound for Cap de la Hague, capturing *Le Chameau* (300 tons burthen, four long 6-pdrs, two swivels).¹⁴⁰⁷ Two months previously, the naval brig *Liberty* and the private vessel *Roulette* had fallen in with a French convoy of twenty-seven sail off Cap

¹⁴⁰² Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port', pp. 169 and 177

¹⁴⁰³ GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letter of August 3rd 1808

¹⁴⁰⁴ Warren to Spencer, August 7th 1796, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. I, pp. 272-274

¹⁴⁰⁵ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of August 11th 1807

¹⁴⁰⁶ Ibid, Entry for October 28th 1803

¹⁴⁰⁷ Selby to Saumarez, January 26th 1804, reproduced in Leyland, (ed.), *Dispatches*, Vol. I, pp. 257-258

de la Hague, and driving off her escort,¹⁴⁰⁸ had secured the capture of three of the enemy vessels, several others being pursued on shore and wrecked.¹⁴⁰⁹

In every element of its operations the resources of the Royal Navy were stretched to the limit: as many as one in four vessels on the Brest blockade were under refit at any time,¹⁴¹⁰ while for the navy as a whole, only two-thirds of vessels were ever on station at any one time.¹⁴¹¹ Off all aspects of naval duty, blockade duty was perhaps to most exacting: Collingwood, for example warned that the ships and men under his command were exposed to 'more danger than a battle once a week'.¹⁴¹² Patrol off the Breton-Norman coast was particularly hazardous: *HMS Amythyst* was scrapped after striking the *Les Hannois* and *Les Grunds* reefs;¹⁴¹³ *HMS Deux Amis* was caught in a 'severe gale of wind'¹⁴¹⁴ off the coast of Jersey and was driven onto rocks;¹⁴¹⁵ while *HMS Rambler* encountered a storm in the Race of Alderney,¹⁴¹⁶ and was feared lost.¹⁴¹⁷ However, the most serious incidence involving vessels specifically posted to the Channel Islands station occurred on November 16th 1801, when D'Auvergne reported that several of his gunboats had been caught in a hurricane while returning to Plymouth for refit. According to the official report, many of the vessels had been lost or severely damaged: at least two – the *William and Lucy*

¹⁴⁰⁸ It is reported that the convoy had been provided with an escort comprising 'a brig and several other armed vessels', but no indication is given of the strength of this force.

¹⁴⁰⁹ *SROI*, SA 3/1/7/19, Entry for November 25th 1803

¹⁴¹⁰ Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, p. 188

¹⁴¹¹ J. Keegan, *Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al Qaeda* (London, 2004) pp. 37-38

¹⁴¹² Greenwood, 'James, Lord de Saumarez', p. 254

¹⁴¹³ *TNA*, WO 1/604, Le Mesurier to Small, January 1st 1796

¹⁴¹⁴ *TNA*, FO 95/612/5, D'Auvergne to Nepean, April 3rd, 1799

¹⁴¹⁵ Although repaired, *HMS Deux Amis* was wrecked off the Isle of Wight on May 23rd 1799

¹⁴¹⁶ *TNA*, FO 95/612/41, D'Auvergne to Nepean, September 2nd, 1800; and HO 69/5/55, Nepean to D'Auvergne, September 5th, 1800

¹⁴¹⁷ Ultimately, *HMS Rambler* succeeded in returning to Portsmouth, but she had been totally dismasted.

and the *Friendship* – were abandoned by their crews, while a third vessel was driven ashore and captured on the Normandy coast.¹⁴¹⁸

Irrespective of the evident difficulties faced by the Royal Navy in terms of being able to make use of the bailiwicks as a point for refit or supply, contemporaries remained adamant as to their strategic value. Warren, in spite of his reservations concerning the suitability of Grouville Bay as an anchorage, argued that the installation of permanent moorings would solve the problem of ships' cables being damaged by the reefs that lay offshore.¹⁴¹⁹ Similarly, Don described Guernsey Roads as 'the great naval station for ships-of-war allotted for the protection of these Islands',¹⁴²⁰ and warned that – should the French gain control of St. Helier, St. Aubin and St. Peter Port – they might become the base of operations for 'between two and three hundred armed vessels'.¹⁴²¹

Although it is likely that Don was referring only to craft similar to the flat-bottomed gunboats which had been constructed at Le Havre and Cherbourg throughout 1794,¹⁴²² it should be remembered that the Channel Islands were well-suited as staging-posts for smaller vessels. While large ships-of-war requiring refit were faced with no option but to return to their home ports in England,¹⁴²³ the majority of vessels on the Channel Islands station were able to make minor repairs in either Jersey or Guernsey,¹⁴²⁴ returning to Britain only as a last resort¹⁴²⁵ or in order to re-supply.¹⁴²⁶

¹⁴¹⁸ *DHC*, 152M/C/1801/ON/34-35, D'Auvergne to Nepean, November 16th 1801

¹⁴¹⁹ Warren to Spencer, August 7th 1796, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. I, pp. 272-274

¹⁴²⁰ *SJA*, L/F/106/A/1, Don to Saumarez, August 16th 1806

¹⁴²¹ *TNA*, HO 98/11, Don to Portland, May 22nd 1806

¹⁴²² *TNA*, ADM 1/6032, Intelligence Received on March 24th 1794 and 'Intelligence Report Covering November and December 1794', undated

¹⁴²³ Morriss, *The Channel Fleet*, p. 167

¹⁴²⁴ *SJA*, A/A1/1, Letter of November 15th 1807

¹⁴²⁵ *TNA*, FO 95/605/4, D'Auvergne to Windham, December 18th 1794

¹⁴²⁶ *TNA*, PC 1/4504, Captain White, *Vulture*, to D'Auvergne, November 21st 1808

From 'Blue Water' to 'Brown Water' – A Shifting Strategy

Ultimately, the involvement of the Channel Islands as a support for the blockade of the Breton-Norman coast arose out of a gradual transformation of British maritime strategy over the course of the Great French War. It is true that the heavy losses inflicted on the French navy in the fleet actions of the 1790s and in the lead-up to Trafalgar did not – as demonstrated by Allemand's escape from Rochefort in January 1808 and that of Willaumez from Biscay in 1809¹⁴²⁷ – bring an end to the maritime contest. However, Napoleon's increasing reliance upon the *guerre de course* (see chapter six) led to the Royal Navy to undergo a transformation 'from a big ship, blue water navy into a small ship, brown water navy',¹⁴²⁸ the intention being that these smaller vessels would be so numerous as to keep watch on every part of the enemy coast. Even by Trafalgar, the frigate had already surpassed the ship-of-the-line as the most numerous class of ship in the Royal Navy, accounting for fifty-three percent of its total force, but these were increasingly supplemented by a host of smaller vessels, particularly sloops, brig-sloops and gunboats.¹⁴²⁹ In addition, Knight has highlighted the emergence of the brig as the Royal Navy's 'maid-of-all-work': in 1804, only thirty-three such vessels had been in commission, but by 1810 there were 169 on the Navy List, with 155 still in commission in 1814.¹⁴³⁰

Although these small vessels were not designed to engage directly with enemy warships, their speed and wide range enabled them to play a crucial role in the

¹⁴²⁷ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, pp. 278-279 and 281

¹⁴²⁸ M. Duffy, 'Review of Q. Colville and J. Davey (eds.), *Nelson, Navy and Nation: The Royal Navy and the British People, 1688-1885* (London, 2013)', *IJMH* 26 (2014), cited in Knight, 'British Defensive Strategy at Sea', p. 93

¹⁴²⁹ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 32

¹⁴³⁰ Knight, 'British Defensive Strategy at Sea', p. 93

maintenance of the blockade. As was highlighted during the examination of the invasion scare of 1794 (see chapter three), it was impossible for the British to keep a permanent watch on enemy ports, and the 'loose blockade' – while likely to tempt the enemy out of port – was a risk-intensive strategy. For example, the French attempt to mount a landing in Galway Bay in support of the United Irishmen's Rebellion (1798) had been facilitated by the fact that the British squadron then blockading Brest had been driven off-station by gales from the south-west,¹⁴³¹ allowing nine French vessels¹⁴³² to slip the net.¹⁴³³ Likewise in 1799, Bruix' took advantage of fog and contrary winds to slip through the British blockade of Brest,¹⁴³⁴ while in 1801, a violent storm scattered the watching British ships and allowed Gantheaume's squadron¹⁴³⁵ to escape port¹⁴³⁶ and head for the Mediterranean.¹⁴³⁷ On such occasions, it was the patrolling frigates, brigs, cutters and sloops which were often relied upon to ascertain the strength and likely destination of the escaped vessels (see chapter eight), and as February 1795, this had led to the commanders of 'cruisers' being instructed to 'avoid seeking 'the capture of single ships...or any action...not absolutely requisite for the security of [the squadron]'.¹⁴³⁸

However, it must be also highlighted that the shift to a 'brown water' strategy was also necessitated by the need for Britain to secure the safety of its maritime supply lines; between June 25th and November 9th 1809 alone, fifteen separate

¹⁴³¹ *NMM*, KIN/25, 'Intelligence Received from *HMS Caesar*', October 2nd 1798

¹⁴³² Their strength was given as '[either] one ship-of-the-line and eight frigates or two ships-of-the-line and seven frigates'

¹⁴³³ *NMM*, KIN/25, 'Orders from Admiral Kingsmill to the Commander of *HMS Caesar*', October 4th 1798, and Nepean to Kingsmill, November 2nd 1798

¹⁴³⁴ Morriss, *The Channel Fleet*, p. 347; and *TNA*, WO 1/606, Waugh to Dundas, July 28th 1794

¹⁴³⁵ Including *Formidable*, *Indivisible*, *Indomptable* (80 guns); *Constitution*, *Dix Aout*, *Dessaix* and *Jean Bart* (74 guns); *Creole* and *Bravoure* (40 guns)

¹⁴³⁶ *NMM*, COR/8, 'Extract of Intelligence from Captain D'Auvergne', January 31st 1801

¹⁴³⁷ Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture*, p. 22

¹⁴³⁸ 'Instructions for the Conduct of Ships Appointed to Obtain Intelligence of the State of the Enemy's Naval Force at Brest', February 5th 1795, reproduced in Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, Vol. I, p. 145

convoys passed through the Danish Straits, numbering 2,210 ships.¹⁴³⁹ The protection of these and other convoys was a duty for which small, fast escort vessels were ideally suited,¹⁴⁴⁰ but in order to provide crews for her growing 'small-ship' navy, the British were obliged to undertake a redistribution of manpower. At the end of the French Revolutionary War, 38,000 seamen had been stationed off the Breton-Norman coast aboard seventy-five warships, but by September 1809 – at the height of the Baltic Campaign – this had fallen to only 7,000 seamen aboard thirty 'much smaller' warships.¹⁴⁴¹ However, while the long-term success of Britain's maritime strategy remained dependent upon 'destroying the Colonial resources of [her] enemies, and adding proportionately to [her] own',¹⁴⁴² naval commanders protested at their ships and crews being diverted in this manner.¹⁴⁴³ Indeed, even when intelligence provided by D'Auvergne's agents¹⁴⁴⁴ had indicated the very real possibility of a French invasion of Ireland,¹⁴⁴⁵ Bridport complained bitterly when he learned that part of his force – then blockading Brest – was to be detached to provide a 'tactical reserve' against such an expedition.¹⁴⁴⁶

The Channel Islands' Hired Vessels

In order to understand the manner in which the Channel Islands were able to supplement the deficiencies suffered by the Navy in terms of its 'cruisers', it is

¹⁴³⁹ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 248

¹⁴⁴⁰ *SROI*, SA 3/1/7/18, Saumarez to the Admiralty, June 7th 1803

¹⁴⁴¹ Knight, 'British Defensive Strategy at Sea', p. 91

¹⁴⁴² Morriss, *The Channel Fleet*, pp. 5-7

¹⁴⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 243

¹⁴⁴⁴ *TNA*, WO 1/922/5, D'Auvergne to Dundas, 'Translation of Intelligence from Brest', December 30th 1796; WO 1/922/9, 'Fighting Order for Hoche's Expedition, Naming Officers and Ships', December 30th 1796; and FO 95/605/102, D'Auvergne to Windham, September 9th 1798

¹⁴⁴⁵ *TNA*, WO 1/607, Dundas to Gordon, May 5th 1797 and June 5th 1798; and FO 95/605/108, D'Auvergne to Windham, January 30th 1799

¹⁴⁴⁶ Morriss, *The Channel Fleet*, pp. 240-243

necessary to turn again to the theories advanced by Corbett; in particular, what he describes as his ‘spade and rifle’ approach to naval strategy. According to this model, it remains ‘impossible to develop an aggressive line of strategy to the full without the support of the defensive’, even when a commander is ‘the most committed devotee of attack’.¹⁴⁴⁷ Within this framework, it is possible to see that the auxiliary vessels on the Channel Islands station – whether under the command of Saumarez or D’Auvergne – were in a position to act as the Royal Navy’s ‘spade’ in the Channel theatre. Moreover, as was highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, the inhabitants’ maritime experience was invaluable to the Service; their unrivalled knowledge of local waters rendered them excellent pilots,¹⁴⁴⁸ while even smugglers served as a potential source of critical intelligence (see chapter eight).¹⁴⁴⁹ However, while it is true that the majority of Royal Navy personnel were volunteers¹⁴⁵⁰ and that many Islanders were likewise attracted by the promise of a bounty,¹⁴⁵¹ their immunity from impressment (see chapter six) obliged commanders to resort to other means of exploiting this valuable source of skilled manpower.

During the first months of the Great French War, the chief method employed by the Royal Navy for the ‘indirect’ recruitment of Channel Islands’ seamen was that of negotiating for the hire of local vessels as a means of augmenting local maritime power. In January 1793, for example, Brown advised that he had engaged a cutter to undertake temporary patrol duties off the coast of Guernsey, and also indicated that – should it prove impossible to send

¹⁴⁴⁷ Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, pp. 33-34

¹⁴⁴⁸ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of January 2nd 1807

¹⁴⁴⁹ Douch, *Flogging Joe’s Warriors*, p. 15

¹⁴⁵⁰ Dancy, ‘British Naval Administration’, p. 62

¹⁴⁵¹ TNA, ADM 1/221, Letter of December 7th 1795; HO 69/17/16, ‘Petition by the Chamber of Commerce’, March 7th 1795; and ADM 1/223, Hamilton to Saumarez, June 12th 1805

additional vessels from Britain – that he could ‘always find [local] luggers and cutters ready to be employed upon the [same] terms’.¹⁴⁵² Likewise, although it had been already decided that a force of two cutters and two sloops were to be provided for the defence of the Channel Islands, Dundas advised both the Lieutenant-Governors that, ‘should [they] both be of opinion that...these vessels would be insufficient’, then he would have ‘no objection’ to meeting the cost of their hiring ‘a lugger or two’.¹⁴⁵³ Falle appears to have taken full advantage of this caveat – a letter of March 19th 1795 making reference to the hired lugger *Pitt*¹⁴⁵⁴ – but separate negotiations between himself and Dundas led to the recommendation that several other civilian vessels might ‘be fitted without much difficulty or expense as armed ships’.¹⁴⁵⁵

By engaging in a closer examination of the terms on which these various civilian vessels were hired, it is evident that a significant value was placed upon their ability to fulfil a range of functions, including blockade duty,¹⁴⁵⁶ patrol and reconnaissance,¹⁴⁵⁷ and convoy escort.¹⁴⁵⁸ For example, when the copper-bottomed ship *Peggy* was hired from a group of Jersey merchants to serve as a troop transport and scout, it was agreed that the owners should receive £480 per month for the duration of the contract, in addition to an ensurance policy of £2,000 against her being burnt or captured.¹⁴⁵⁹ In the same year, D’Auvergne

¹⁴⁵² TNA, HO 98/24, Brown to Dundas, January 17th 1793

¹⁴⁵³ TNA, HO 99/1, Dundas to Falle and Brown, January 12th 1793

¹⁴⁵⁴ TNA, WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, March 19th 1795

¹⁴⁵⁵ TNA, HO 98/3, Dundas to Falle, March 12th 1793

¹⁴⁵⁶ NMM, COR/7, Saumarez to *HMS Cesar* and *HMS Senior*, October 22nd 1800; SROI, SA 3/1/7/18, Saumarez to the Admiralty, June 3rd 1803; and TNA, ADM 1/222, Saumarez to Nepean, June 20th 1803 and October 9th 1803

¹⁴⁵⁷ TNA, ADM 1/221, Letter of August 18th 1795; ADM 1/223, Saumarez to Barrow, February 10th 1805; and SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of March 20th 1807

¹⁴⁵⁸ TNA, ADM 2/1097, entries for the hired vessels *Alfred*, (brig, 8 guns), *Mentor* (cutter, 10 guns) and *Nymphe* (cutter, armament unknown), August 30th 1793, October 1st and 3rd 1793, cited in Avery, ‘The Naval Protection of Britain’s Maritime Trade’, p. 56; HO 69/4, Nepean to D’Auvergne, February 17th 1797; and SJA, A/A1/5, Letter of November 2nd 1811

¹⁴⁵⁹ SJA, A/C7/1, ‘Memorandum of Agreement re. the *Peggy*’, September 6th 1794

drew £370 from Dundas and Nepean in order to pay for the hire of the lugger *Lottery*,¹⁴⁶⁰ and though she was hired primarily for *La Correspondence* (see chapter nine), similar payments continued throughout the War in relation to the scout service. In July 1806, Don's accounts reveal that a portion of the £1,804 drawn from government that month was marked for the hiring of two armed cutters,¹⁴⁶¹ while in November 1807, two *schuyts* were hired for a combined cost of £804.¹⁴⁶² Even during the latter years of the War, similar vessels accounted for a considerable portion of local expenditure: in 1810, six unarmed scouts were hired at a cost of £1 9s per boat, per day, while in 1811, five armed vessels were hired at a bounty of 10s per ton, and £5 per man.¹⁴⁶³

The Channel Islands and the Blockade of Ports

With respect to the Channel Islands' involvement within the blockade of the Breton-Norman coast, their strategic value can be seen to have been at its height after 1797, when intelligence revealed that the French government intended to 'send only small convoys along the shore'.¹⁴⁶⁴ As well as being able to hug the shore and sail under the cover of coastal batteries, these convoys were also able to escape the attentions of larger warships by hiding amongst reefs, and several of the vessels on the Channel Islands' station enjoyed repeated success in these waters. In April 1799, for example, it was reported that 'the cruisers of this station' had forced a convoy bearing grain and flour from St. Malo to Brest 'to shelter behind the rocks on the Breton coast', enabling

¹⁴⁶⁰ SJA, L/F/145/5, 'Bill of Exchange for Hire of the Lugger *Lottery*', December 27th 1794

¹⁴⁶¹ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of July 7th 1806

¹⁴⁶² SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of November 9th 1807

¹⁴⁶³ SJA, A/A1/6, Letters of August 9th 1810 and July 26th 1811

¹⁴⁶⁴ TNA, ADM 1/6033, 'Extract from St. John and Warren', June 20th 1796

D'Auvergne to send Lord Proby in *HMS Danaë* to intercept it.¹⁴⁶⁵ Likewise in early 1800, the hired brig *Aristocrat* (brig, 18 guns) captured both the French privateer *L'Aventure* and the gunboat *No. 57*,¹⁴⁶⁶ while the *Fairy* (sloop, 16 guns) and *Harpy* (brig-sloop, 18 guns) 'enticed' the French vessel *La Pallas* (frigate, 38 guns) away from the protection of the shore, and in spite of the 'unequal contest', secured her surrender.¹⁴⁶⁷ Furthermore, in December 1809, *HMS Sharpshooter* (brig, 14 guns) and a hired scout anchored in Grouville Bay recaptured the British merchantman *Calista* from the privateer *Grand Napoleon*, which attempted to reach St. Malo by hiding among the *La Motte* rocks.¹⁴⁶⁸

Despite these successful littoral operations – a trait shared by the local privateers¹⁴⁶⁹ – it was stressed that the commanders of hired vessels that they were to make every attempt to avoid sustaining 'unnecessary damage' in carrying out their duties.¹⁴⁷⁰ This reflected the value of these vessels in making up the Navy's shortfall in auxiliary craft: particularly with regards the problem of maintaining a watch over the smaller ports along the Breton-Norman coast, such as Solidor, Cancale, St. Germain, Portbail, Carteret, Dielette and Granville.¹⁴⁷¹ In September 1800, for example, D'Auvergne informed St. Vincent that he had dispatched two sloops to accompany the *Lion* frigate in supporting the blockade of St. Malo and Granville and disrupting communication between Brest and Cherbourg.¹⁴⁷² Moreover, while Trafalgar stripped the Channel

¹⁴⁶⁵ TNA, FO 95/612/7, D'Auvergne to Nepean, April 6th 1799

¹⁴⁶⁶ TNA, FO 95/612/27, D'Auvergne to Nepean, January 8th 1800; and D'Auvergne to Nepean, February 20th 1800

¹⁴⁶⁷ TNA, FO 95/612/28, D'Auvergne to Nepean, February 14th 1800; and BL, Add MS 37867, D'Auvergne to Windham, February 26th 1800

¹⁴⁶⁸ TNA, PC 1/4504, White to D'Auvergne, December 15th 1809

¹⁴⁶⁹ Jamieson, 'The Return to Privateering', pp. 151-152

¹⁴⁷⁰ SJA, A/A5/2, 'Instructions to Captain Pirouet, Armed Scout *Rose*', November 6th 1809

¹⁴⁷¹ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of April 2nd 1808 and L/F/95/B/9, Don to 'My Dear Sir', October 27th 1811

¹⁴⁷² TNA, FO 95/612/44, D'Auvergne to Nepean, September 20th 1800 and D'Auvergne to St. Vincent, September 21st 1800

Islands of 'the 'special strategic significance' that they had enjoyed during the 1790s and early 1800s',¹⁴⁷³ France's increasing focus upon the *guerre de course* – both involving privateers and naval 'raiding squadrons'¹⁴⁷⁴ – ensured constant employment for local vessels. Throughout the winter of 1809, the armed scout *Rose* was engaged in reconnoitring the enemy's strength between Carteret and St. Malo,¹⁴⁷⁵ and in 1811, joined the armed scout *Friends* in a cruise to Frehel, St. Malo, Granville and Chausey.¹⁴⁷⁶

However, while such activity was aimed primarily at the protection of local trade, the support given by local vessels to the blockade of ports such as Cherbourg and Granville also had the additional effect of safeguarding the Channel Islands against possible invasion.¹⁴⁷⁷ In June 1803, for example, the *Insolent* (gun-brig, fourteen guns) – then stationed off Jersey – was detached to support the *Liberty* (brig, sixteen guns) and the *Eling* (schooner, fourteen guns)¹⁴⁷⁸ in a cruise against St. Malo and Granville. At this time, it was reported that a force of armed transports sufficient for 6,000 men was then under construction Granville, with 15,000 men and between thirty and sixty transports being sent thither from St. Malo. According to Doyle, rumours that the gunboats were destined for Boulogne were 'plainly a *ruse de guerre* to throw us of our guard',¹⁴⁷⁹ and although the War of the Fourth Coalition forced Napoleon to commit all available manpower to the Rhine frontier, the Channel Islands remained on the alert.¹⁴⁸⁰ Similarly, when a force of twelve gun-brigs, six luggers and a sloop escaped Brest in August 1804, two vessels of Saumarez'

¹⁴⁷³ Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and British Maritime Strategy', p. 227

¹⁴⁷⁴ Ritchie, 'Government Measures Against Piracy', p. 18

¹⁴⁷⁵ SJA, A/A5/2, Letters of November 6th 1809 and December 3rd 1809

¹⁴⁷⁶ SJA, A/A1/4, Letters of October 21st 1811

¹⁴⁷⁷ NMM, COR/7, 'Continuation of the Last Communication Received from Brest', October 16th 1800

¹⁴⁷⁸ SROI, SA 3/1/7/18, Saumarez to the Admiralty, June 7th 1803

¹⁴⁷⁹ TNA, WO 1/605, Doyle to Hobart, July 26th 1803

¹⁴⁸⁰ TNA, WO 1/925/73, D'Auvergne to Shere, September 16th 1806

squadron forced them to put into Brehat,¹⁴⁸¹ and although D'Auvergne's gunboats failed to intercept them, the former despatched the cutters *Sylph* and *Duke of Clarence* to 'check their further progress'.¹⁴⁸²

Indeed, while November 1805 may have seen Doyle express his belief that 'the late glorious naval victories' had greatly reduced the threat from the Continent (see chapter three), D'Auvergne's scouts continued to submit ominous reports of naval preparations along the Breton-Norman coast.¹⁴⁸³ During the spring of 1806, a large number of vessels were confirmed as refitting in the inner harbour at Brest, after the blockading cruisers had incorrectly assumed that they had escaped seaward,¹⁴⁸⁴ and such preparations continued even in the face of an apparent 'paucity of finances'.¹⁴⁸⁵ In October, for example, the French ship-of-the-line *Regulus* and two large frigates were reported to have got safely into Brest on the 3rd, while *Revenge* and *Syriene*, despite being greatly affected by scurvy, were safely anchored at Brehat. In addition, the 48-gun frigate *Italienne* was making ready for sea at St. Malo, wherein repairs were being undertaken on two other 48-gun vessels – *Neriade* and *Belone* – as well as the corvette *Milan*.¹⁴⁸⁶ That the French enjoyed a degree of success with these smaller ships is demonstrated by the fact that both the *Syriene* and *Italienne* were reported as having returned to operational service in January 1808, and had been sighted preying upon both British and Channel Islands' shipping.¹⁴⁸⁷

¹⁴⁸¹ TNA, PC 1/4503, Saumarez to D'Auvergne, August 13th 1804

¹⁴⁸² Ibid, Saumarez to Bouillon, October 5th 1804

¹⁴⁸³ TNA, WO 1/925/49, D'Auvergne to Shere, May 14th 1806

¹⁴⁸⁴ TNA, WO 1/925/25, D'Auvergne to Shere, March 25th 1806

¹⁴⁸⁵ TNA, WO 1/925/73, D'Auvergne to Shere, September 16th 1806

¹⁴⁸⁶ TNA, WO 1/925/97, D'Auvergne to Shere, October 20th 1806

¹⁴⁸⁷ TNA, WO 1/925/173, D'Auvergne to Cooke, October 20th 1806

The 'Strategical-Commercial Blockade'

As advantageous as possession of the Channel Islands may have been from the perspective of the 'channel blockade', their geographic position can be seen to have achieved its greatest significance within the context of the above-mentioned 'strategic blockade'. While the inability of the Royal Navy to maintain a constant watch over the ports between Cherbourg and St. Malo left the Channel Islands open to attack from multiple points,¹⁴⁸⁸ the proximity of the local squadrons to so many small ports was also a considerable weakness for French coastal trade. As was highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, the potential for the Channel Islands to serve as a base from which a strong force of frigates and cruisers might readily intercept enemy convoys and 'distress the enemy exceedingly' had been recognised as early as 1793.¹⁴⁸⁹ Indeed, it may be argued that Saumarez himself had given a clear demonstration of the ease with which vessels cruising between the Channel Islands and the naval bases along Britain's south coast might gain the opportunity to put Moira's suggestion into action. En-route to Guernsey in March 1793, Saumarez had captured a 100-ton French brig laden with salt after chasing her through the Race of Alderney, while his other vessels¹⁴⁹⁰ had intercepted two smaller French vessels, though it is unclear if these too were captured.¹⁴⁹¹

The ability of small squadrons of larger vessels to exploit the Channel Islands' station in this fashion can be seen to have become highly influential during the period of most widespread royalist activity (see chapter nine). Even after the

¹⁴⁸⁸ *SJA*, L/F/95/A/2, Don to Spencer, May 22nd 1806

¹⁴⁸⁹ *SJA*, L/F/08/A/26, Moira to MacBride, December 26th 1793'

¹⁴⁹⁰ HMS Drake (brig-sloop, 14 guns) and HMS Cockatrice (cutter, 14 guns)

¹⁴⁹¹ *SROI*, SA 3/1/2/4, Letter of March 18th 1793

defeat of the Vendéan royalists had put an end to any hope of long-term success against the Republican forces, the *chouans* of Brittany continued to seriously disrupt land-based communications with Brest and other key ports.¹⁴⁹² Consequently, the French were obliged to transport almost all essential supplies by means of coastal convoys¹⁴⁹³ – almost all of which passed within range of the Channel Islands¹⁴⁹⁴ – and D’Auvergne and Saumarez were quick to seize the initiative.¹⁴⁹⁵ In 1804, for example, Saumarez’ squadron captured the *Brave* (16 guns, 100 men), the *Jeune Henri* (12 guns, 64 men), an unnamed privateer out of Cherbourg, and four gunboats of unknown origin, as well as being credited with the destruction of a number of gunboats operating in the Race of Alderney, including five vessels near Flamanville.¹⁴⁹⁶ Unfortunately, as is the case with the victims of the Bailiwicks’ privateers (see chapter six), it is impossible to accurately estimate the proportion of French convoys which succeeded in running the blockade.

In spite of such analytical limitations, it is evident that both Saumarez’ and D’Auvergne’s forces were instrumental in restricting the flow of naval stores into the Channel ports; especially after Trafalgar, when such supplies were instrumental for Napoleon’s implementation of the *guerre de course*. In the autumn of 1806, vessels of Saumarez’ squadron twice forced *Le Salamandre* (store-ship, 26 guns) to abandon an attempt to victual Brest,¹⁴⁹⁷ while in July 1809, *Surly* (cutter, 12 guns) and *Escort* (gun-brig, 12 guns) – both of

¹⁴⁹² TNA, FO 95/605/29, D’Auvergne to Windham, December 19th 1795; and FO 95/612/23, D’Auvergne to Nepean, November 18th 1799

¹⁴⁹³ TNA, FO 95/605/18, D’Auvergne to Windham, July 27th 1795; and HO 69/4, Nepean to D’Auvergne, April 23rd 1798

¹⁴⁹⁴ De La Case, Comte, *Journal of the Private Life and Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon at Saint Helena*, Four Vols. (London, 1824) Vol. III, p. 12

¹⁴⁹⁵ TNA, FO 95/605/9, D’Auvergne to Windham, April 6th 1795; and FO 95/605/18, D’Auvergne to Windham, July 27th 1795

¹⁴⁹⁶ Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, Vol. II, p. 86

¹⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 89-90

D'Auvergne's squadron – each intercepted a convoy making for St. Malo.¹⁴⁹⁸ Similarly, the hired scouts performed a vital service in terms of policing trade routes: not only by assisting in the capture of enemy vessels and the disruption of trade between Brest and St. Malo,¹⁴⁹⁹ but also by engaging in anti-smuggling operations. In March 1801, for example, the *Aristocrat*¹⁵⁰⁰ seized the British merchant vessel *Rachel* in the act of making for St. Malo with a cargo of 489½ quarters of oats, barley, malt and pease. Curiously, her papers showed the vessel as having cleared for Liverpool, and when asked to explain himself, the Master claimed to have mistaken Cap Techel for the Isle of Man, and gave the 'very improbable, not to say impossible' explanation of having been 'driven thence from the Western Isles of Scotland by successive gales'.¹⁵⁰¹

Moreover, while the successes achieved by the vessels on the Channel Islands station may have been primarily against coastal transports and smaller merchant vessels, their importance was enhanced by the fact that regular patrols off the northern coast of France were not instituted until 1806. Indeed, Crowhurst highlights that out of fifteen enemy merchantmen captured in this area by British warships between 1793 and 1813, eight were taken between 1806 and 1813, and three in 1793 'during the initial mopping-up of enemy vessels'.¹⁵⁰² However, while the primary duty of the vessels assigned to the Channel Islands was the defence of the bailiwicks and the security of local trade,¹⁵⁰³ it is clear that their officers were active nonetheless in the taking of prizes, and particularly enemy privateers. Between March 1795 and March

¹⁴⁹⁸ *SJL*, LSF C397.5, Bib Ref: 326760, 'From *The Jersey Magazine or Monthly Recorder*', July 1809'

¹⁴⁹⁹ *NMM*, COR/7, Movements at the Port of Brest, August 8th 1800

¹⁵⁰⁰ Though referred to by D'Auvergne as a 'cutter', the *Aristocrat* appears in Admiralty records as a lugger (1794-8) and a brig (1799-1801)

¹⁵⁰¹ *TNA*, FO 95/612/86, D'Auvergne to Nepean, March 8th 1801

¹⁵⁰² Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 73

¹⁵⁰³ *TNA*, PC 1/121, D'Auvergne to the Exchequer, June 10th 1802 and *SROI*, SA 3/1/7/18, 'Orders Received from HRH the Commander-in-Chief and Admiral St. Vincent', July 6th 1803

1800, at least eight French ships are recorded as having been captured by either Royal Navy scouts or hired vessels operating out of the Channel Islands, including two brigs taken by *HMS Pilote* (brig, 14 guns)¹⁵⁰⁴ and a sloop captured by *HMS Royalist* (lugger, 8 guns).¹⁵⁰⁵ Of the remaining five vessels, four – a cutter, two luggers and a schooner – were privateers, while the fifth was an English vessel which had been taken by the cutter and was being escorted back to a French port (possibly St. Malo) under a prize crew.¹⁵⁰⁶

The Inter-Insular Signal System

Unlike their support of the Royal Navy's blockade of the ports along the Breton-Norman coast, the Channel Islands' ability to assist in the implementation of a 'strategical-commercial blockade' was enhanced by the construction of the telegraphic signal system. While the evolution of this communications network has been already explored in some detail (see chapter three), its actual operational effectiveness has been considered only insofar as the stations were able to provide the local authorities with intelligence concerning a potential assault.¹⁵⁰⁷ This was, however, only one of the justifications given for the development of the signal system: while Kavanagh may be incorrect in having identified the Chamber of Commerce as the 'prime movers',¹⁵⁰⁸ it is true nonetheless that the system's main purpose was to protect local mercantile shipping. For example, during the conversion of the existing signal posts to the telegraphic system, it was ordered that the new masts should be supplied with

¹⁵⁰⁴ TNA, HO 69/3, Nepean to D'Auvergne, March 15th 1795; and ADM 1/221, Letter of August 18th 1795

¹⁵⁰⁵ TNA, PC 1/117B, 'Declaration of the Master and a Passenger of the Sloop *Bon Amis*', December 1796

¹⁵⁰⁶ TNA, HO 69/11/22, Le Mesurier to D'Auvergne, June 13th 1796; HO 69/17/32, Thoreau to D'Auvergne, undated, 1796; HO 69/5, Nepean to D'Auvergne, April 9th 1799; and FO 95/612/33, D'Auvergne to Nepean, March 25th 1800

¹⁵⁰⁷ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of September 20th 1811

¹⁵⁰⁸ M.B. Kavanagh, 'Signal Stations in Jersey', *ABSJ* 20:2 (1970) 137

the English Naval Code, rather than the local Code used hitherto.¹⁵⁰⁹ In order to facilitate efficient communication with the squadron in Guernsey Roads, the officers and men stationed at the various posts were instructed to familiarise themselves with ‘Sir Home Popham’s Telegraphic Dictionary’,¹⁵¹⁰ and Don ensured that up-to-date editions of the Code were regularly supplied.¹⁵¹¹

Further evidence as to the intention for the signal system to function as a support to Britain’s control of the local trade routes and sea-lanes can be inferred from the manner in which the network was expanded. As has been already mentioned, the Channel Islands’ original posts had been capable of acting as little more than a chain of ‘warning beacons’ in the event of an invasion.¹⁵¹² However, both the fortification of Cherbourg¹⁵¹³ and Napoleon’s increasing focus on the *guerre de course*¹⁵¹⁴ forced Don and his colleagues to recognise the necessity of ensuring that efficient communication might be carried on between all the Channel Islands. Even so, extending the inter-insular system was a slow process: for example, while the original trials had highlighted the ‘utmost importance’ of the Sark station,¹⁵¹⁵ construction was still ongoing in November 1807.¹⁵¹⁶ Moreover, it was later discovered that the location chosen for the post was not fit for purpose, necessitating the construction of a new station on a site ‘[visible from] Grosnez Point, Guernsey Roads, Fort George and Alderney’.¹⁵¹⁷ As a result of such modifications, it was estimated that messages might be passed between Jersey and Guernsey in under fifteen

¹⁵⁰⁹ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of August 11th 1807

¹⁵¹⁰ SJA, A/A5/2, May 3rd 1809

¹⁵¹¹ SJA, A/A1/5, Letter of April 10th 1812

¹⁵¹² Stead, *A Picture of Jersey*, p. 74

¹⁵¹³ De La Case, *Conversations of the Emperor Napoleon*, Vol. III, pp. 2-3

¹⁵¹⁴ TNA, ADM 1/226, D’Auvergne to Crocker, January 23rd 1811

¹⁵¹⁵ SJA, L/F/106/A/2, Don to Saumarez, August 16th 1806

¹⁵¹⁶ Ibid, Don to Doyle, November 15th 1807

¹⁵¹⁷ SJA, A/A1/1, Letters of March 28th 1808 and March 29th 1808

minutes,¹⁵¹⁸ while official tests indicated that the squadron in Guernsey Roads might be apprised of an enemy leaving port in less than half an hour.¹⁵¹⁹

It is evident, therefore, that the greatest advantage offered by the Channel Islands signal system was its ability – as observed by Don in a report of 1807 – to render both the Channel Islands and the south coast of Great Britain almost wholly invulnerable to a surprise attack.¹⁵²⁰ Both he and Doyle expressed complete confidence in the efficiency with which any enemy vessel fortunate enough to slip through the Royal Navy's blockade might be 'picked up', and the ease with which 'any important intelligence [could] be conveyed from one Island to the other'.¹⁵²¹ Furthermore, they emphasised that the system would give them access 'within a few minutes, [to] the opinion of any of the officers of the Navy' engaged in patrol of the local waters',¹⁵²² information which could be used to plan a coordinated defence (see chapter three). Even so, the completion of the expanded signal system did not mark the end of attempts to improve local communications; following his appointment as Superintendent of Telegraphs for the Channel Islands, Peter Archer Mulgrave proposed that the stations be converted to the Chappe¹⁵²³ system.¹⁵²⁴ This 'ingenious' plan was supported by D'Auvergne, who argued that it would 'considerably strengthen' the local defences by 'uniting our means against the enemy',¹⁵²⁵ and later praised the

¹⁵¹⁸ *SJA*, L/F/95/A/35, Don to Doyle, July 2nd 1808

¹⁵¹⁹ *SJA*, A/A1/1, Letter of August 21st 1808

¹⁵²⁰ *TNA*, PC 1/3794, Don to Anon, 'Secret and Confidential', September 5th 1807

¹⁵²¹ *SJA*, L/F/106/A/1, Dumaresq to Don, August 15th 1806

¹⁵²² *SJA*, A/A1/1, Letter of August 17th 1807

¹⁵²³ The Chappe Telegraph had been invented in France by engineer Claude Chappe and his brothers and had been quickly adopted by the French Government. By 1850, there were over 550 Chappe Stations in France, spanning over 5,000 kilometers of line.

¹⁵²⁴ V. Coysh, 'The Ingenious Mr. Mulgrave' *TSG* 22:5 (1990) 806-807

¹⁵²⁵ *SJA*, A/A2/1, Letter of August 15th 1810

extent to which it had enabled the local troops to be directed with 'precision and celerity' in the event of an assault.¹⁵²⁶

Finally, it must be noted that the effectiveness of the post-1806 Channel Islands signal system – particularly in terms of its enabling communication between the Islands and the squadrons patrolling local waters – helped to offset a significant problem faced by the Royal Navy. Throughout the first decade of the Great French War, the pressures on the resources of the Service meant that the Bailiwicks went for long periods without direct contact with the Fleet; for six months during 1797, *HMS Minerva* (frigate, 38 guns) had been the only British frigate to visit Jersey.¹⁵²⁷ Likewise in the autumn of 1794, Small lamented the absence of both MacBride's squadron and D'Auvergne's flotilla, and complained that *HMS Eurydice* (frigate, 34 guns) – despite her being 'the only ship-of-war on the station' – had been ordered to depart.¹⁵²⁸ The signal system also served to compensate for the difficulty of providing convoys for the local merchant shipping, troop transports and supply ships;¹⁵²⁹ a role which, as has been already mentioned, was often performed by the vessels of Saumarez' squadron.¹⁵³⁰ Since this required the Channel Islands' naval defence to be temporarily diminished¹⁵³¹ the Admiral lodged a formal protest, claiming that he would be unable to both ensure the safety of the local merchants and maintain watch over the enemy.¹⁵³²

¹⁵²⁶ TNA, ADM 1/226, D'Auvergne to the Admiralty, July 13th 1811

¹⁵²⁷ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, Gordon to Townshend, April 21st 1797

¹⁵²⁸ TNA, WO 1/602, Small to Amherst, August 6th 1794

¹⁵²⁹ TNA, FO 95/612/4, D'Auvergne to Nepean, March 19th, 1799; and FO 95/612/81, D'Auvergne to Nepean, March 9th 1801

¹⁵³⁰ TNA, HO 69/2/27, Woodford to D'Auvergne, November 6th 1799

¹⁵³¹ Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, Vol. I, p. 119

¹⁵³² TNA, WO 1/605, Doyle to Hobart, November 24th 1805

The Smuggling Trade – Between the Devil and the Deep

For much of the eighteenth century, the Channel Islanders' flagrant participation in the smuggling trade had been a source of embarrassment to the British government. However, as Morieux points out, the authorities had been 'hard-pushed to punish these abuses':¹⁵³³ not least because of the fact that the bailiwicks' traditional status as 'free ports' was interpreted by the local mercantile elite as lending legitimacy to local smuggling operations.¹⁵³⁴ So entrenched was the practice of smuggling that on outbreak of war, the local military officers seriously considered employing the captains and crews as an auxiliary defensive force. In Guernsey, for example, Colonel Dundas instructed the Sheriff – the Executive Officer of the Royal Court – to 'sound the captains of cutters employed in smuggling' and ascertain as to their willingness to assist in the defence of the Island in the event of invasion. The response would certainly seem to indicate that the smugglers regarded the authorities – at least during wartime – as 'the enemy of my enemy, since the Sheriff reported that 'ten captains and nearly 400 men [of] determined courage' had volunteered their services. Consequently, it was proposed that these 'desperadoes' should, in the event of an invasion, be seconded to aid the troops of the garrison: each man should be 'armed with cutlasses and bayonets' and placed under the command of the Major Lewis of the 64th Regt. of Foot.¹⁵³⁵

Throughout the Great French War, the issue of the perceived legality of the local smuggling ventures was to remain a source of considerable tension

¹⁵³³ Morieux, 'Diplomacy from Below', 97

¹⁵³⁴ Cox, 'The Transformation of St. Peter Port', p. 40

¹⁵³⁵ TNA HO 98/24, Col. Thomas Dundas to Sir David Dundas, February 1st 1793

between the Channel Islands and the British government.¹⁵³⁶ Although 1800 may have seen Jersey's Chamber of Commerce finally disavow 'all unfair practices tending...to defraud or injure His Majesty's revenues', this was by no means an admission of defeat on the part of the local merchants. According to the terms of the carefully-worded agreement, the Members of the Chamber professed themselves 'willing to bind themselves under any *reasonable* securities and penalties', but that they would challenge any 'infringement of the civil rights of the inhabitants'.¹⁵³⁷ One such perceived threat was the attempt by the British government to install a 'Commissioner of the Customs' to oversee the implementation of any agreed regulations,¹⁵³⁸ a move which was greeted with open hostility on the part of the inhabitants. Despite being empowered to compel the local authorities to assist in the discharge of his duties, it is clear that the 'Commissioner' was undermined by corruption at the highest level; in Guernsey, for example, the Bailiff and two Jurats were discovered to be orchestrating large shipments of contraband to Devon and Cornwall.¹⁵³⁹

In 1805, a more vigorous attempt was made by the British government to limit the potential damage caused by the Channel Islands' smugglers: this time by seeking to expand the terms of the Smuggling Acts so as to render the Channel Islands as *de facto*, if not *de jure*, party to their provisions. According to the Secretary of State, the local authorities were obliged to enforce these statutes 'in the same manner as they would do any other acknowledged law of the

¹⁵³⁶ TNA PC 1/3470, 'Report of His Majesty's Attorney-General and Solicitor-General upon the Subject of Preventing Illicit Trade to and from the Islands of Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney and Sark', November 19th 1799

¹⁵³⁷ SJA L/A/38/A1, Entry for September 15th 1800

¹⁵³⁸ TNA, HO 99/2, Circular to Gordon, Dalrymple and Le Mesurier, August 14th 1800

¹⁵³⁹ Carey, *The Channel Islands*, p. 145

Islands',¹⁵⁴⁰ but again, this assertion appears to have been made in ignorance of the Channel Islands' legislative independence (see chapter one). Certainly, the perceived attempt to circumvent their 'special relationship' once more aroused much opposition, and petitions were lodged with the Privy Council via the States Assemblies. In Jersey, the Chamber of Commerce protested that the terms of the Smuggling Acts threatened to 'annihilate the ancient charters and privileges of the Island, [and] strike at the very existence of the Trade from which is derived its dearest interests'.¹⁵⁴¹ Likewise in Guernsey, representatives of the leading merchant families protested that the Smuggling Acts possessed no force in the bailiwick unless accompanied by an Order in Council.¹⁵⁴² Indeed, it was not until 1809 that the Guernsey Chamber of Commerce at last made solemn pledges to '[put] an effectual end to all contraband trade...by denouncing those who may hereafter attempt to engage in it'.¹⁵⁴³

Despite the fact that the inhabitants' indulgence in smuggling and their defence of its legitimacy may have been founded on a piece of legalistic historical fiction (see chapter two), the potential consequences of alienating the Bailiwicks' smugglers had been made all too apparent in previous disputes. For example, when the first attempt had been made to establish a system of customs houses in the Channel Islands in 1767, the French government had responded by creating a number of free ports, triggering a flood of local gold into the Parisian banks.¹⁵⁴⁴ In addition, although Jamieson argues that financial losses resulting of the Channel Islands' smuggling operations became untenable after 1800¹⁵⁴⁵

¹⁵⁴⁰ TNA PC 1/3470, Hawksbury to Brig-Gen. Cockell, November 22nd 1805

¹⁵⁴¹ SJA, L/A/38/A1, Entry for December 21st 1804

¹⁵⁴² TNA PC 1/3470, 'Statement of the Royal Court of Guernsey to Cockell', November 29th 1805

¹⁵⁴³ GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letter from Government House, January 19th 1809

¹⁵⁴⁴ Podger, '*Nest of Vypers*', p. 155

¹⁵⁴⁵ Jamieson, '*The Channel Islands and Smuggling*', pp. 208-209

– three years after the abandonment of the Gold Standard¹⁵⁴⁶ – the British authorities were faced with little option but to tolerate their activities. Not only were goods produced in the Bailiwicks exempt from import duties – a categorisation which was often applied to French imports ‘matured’ in the Channel Islands¹⁵⁴⁷ – but the profits were frequently siphoned into legitimate British businesses and local privateering ventures.¹⁵⁴⁸ Most importantly, from 1806 onwards, the Bailiwicks’ smuggling operations were acknowledged as a as offering a potential counter to the Milan and Berlin Decrees, as long as the local merchants could be convinced of ‘the boon of smuggling into France’.¹⁵⁴⁹

Although Doyle may have enjoyed some success in this endeavour, it is clear that many local smuggling rings continued to direct their attention to existing clients in Great Britain. For example, the records of Carteret Priaux and the Randle Brothers – two of Guernsey’s most prominent merchant families – reveal that their operations remained focused primarily on Devon and Cornwall. Between November 1806 and February 1807, these two families were responsible for the landing of 1,250 ankers of assorted spirits, twelve ‘sixes’ of brandy, twenty hundredweight of tobacco, six hundredweight of pepper and a chest of Suchong tea.¹⁵⁵⁰ It should be noted, however, that all of this activity was carried out in the wake of predictions by Carteret Priaux’ agents that the steps taken by the British government would either ‘cripple the trade of Guernsey’,¹⁵⁵¹ or would result in the termination of ‘the old mode of the spirit

¹⁵⁴⁶ Muir, *Britain and the Defeat of Napoleon*, p. 2

¹⁵⁴⁷ Podger, A. ‘*Nest of Vypers*’, p. 154

¹⁵⁴⁸ Jamieson, ‘The Channel Islands and Smuggling’, pp. 208-209

¹⁵⁴⁹ TNA, HO 98/41, Doyle to Hawkesbury, January 1st 1808

¹⁵⁵⁰ Jamieson, ‘The Channel Islands and Smuggling’, p. 215

¹⁵⁵¹ PLG, Uncatalogued, Bernard Morgan to Carteret Priaux, August 12th 1805

business'.¹⁵⁵² Consequently, with respect to their opposition to the enactment of anti-smuggling statutes, the principal motivation of the local merchants and commercial bourgeois shall always remain a matter for speculation. It is simply impossible to determine whether their appeals to their rights and privileges under the *Constitutions* were based on a genuine desire to promote the economy of the Channel Islands as a whole, or simply a means by which to justify a highly lucrative, but wholly illegal, trade.¹⁵⁵³

The Use of Smuggling as a Method of Subversion

Regardless of the motivation of the local mercantile community during their ongoing 'battle of wills' with the customs service, their relationship with the British government was turned on its head in the wake of Napoleon's declaration of the 'Continental System'. As was stated at the beginning of this chapter, the Channel Islands provided a means by which contraband goods could continue to be transported across the maritime border, and the British were quick to take full advantage of this loophole. By an Order in Council of December 18th 1807, the Lieutenant-Governors were empowered to issue licenses permitting trade between the Channel Islands and 'any port of France from Caen or Morlaix inclusive'.¹⁵⁵⁴ More importantly, not only could this trade be carried out by neutral vessels, but unarmed French vessels of less than 100 tons burthen were likewise to be given 'every possible encouragement' and left unmolested by either naval officers or privateers.¹⁵⁵⁵ By employing those

¹⁵⁵² *PLG*, Uncatalogued, Richard Kemp to Carteret Priaulx, September 14th 1805

¹⁵⁵³ *TNA*, PC 1/2298, 'Petition Against the [Anti-Smuggling] Act', 1805

¹⁵⁵⁴ *TNA*, PC 1/4507, Order in Council, December 18th 1807

¹⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid*, Doyle to D'Auvergne, April 13th 1810

Frenchmen ‘well known to some of the most respectable merchants’,¹⁵⁵⁶ the British were able to exchange ‘sugar, coffee, corn, indigo, Jesuit’s Bark’ and other colonial goods¹⁵⁵⁷ for the additional food supplies on which the Channel Islands remained so dependent (see chapter five).

Furthermore, in spite of the vigorous manner in which the British government sought to stamp out smuggling in the Channel Islands, this was merely an extension of a financial policy resulting from the rising cost of the war and the abandonment of the Gold Standard. While Don issued warnings against Alderney men landing illicit goods in Jersey in 1806,¹⁵⁵⁸ and Doyle and Le Mesurier both pledged to suppress smuggling in Guernsey in 1809,¹⁵⁵⁹ the reality was that this illicit trade was recognised as being of great utility to the British government. Not only were the Bailiwicks’ fishermen, with their *de facto* neutral status, ideally placed to smuggle British goods into France in contravention of the Continental Blockade,¹⁵⁶⁰ but from the very earliest years of the war, French cartel ships had attempted to source illicit consignments from the Islands.¹⁵⁶¹ Indeed, the tobacco runners of Alderney – including those of French origin¹⁵⁶² – had proved a vital source of intelligence, as emphasised by the fact that Le Mesurier proposed a reward of eight or ten pounds for any smuggler providing him with accurate reports of French activity.¹⁵⁶³ Similarly, many of the efforts made to assist the royalist insurrections in Brittany,

¹⁵⁵⁶ GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letter from Government House, July 13th 1808

¹⁵⁵⁷ GSG, A/IV/80/16, ‘Observations upon the Proposed Trade to and from the Channel Islands to France by Lieutenant-General Doyle’, undated

¹⁵⁵⁸ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of September 21st 1806

¹⁵⁵⁹ GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letter from Government House, May 27th 1809

¹⁵⁶⁰ Morieux, ‘Diplomacy from Below’, 97; A. Grab, *Napoleon and the Transformation of Europe* (Basingstoke, 2003) pp. 70 and 195

¹⁵⁶¹ TNA HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Dundas, April 23rd 1793

¹⁵⁶² Ibid, Le Mesurier to Nepean, March 1st 1793

¹⁵⁶³ Ibid, Le Mesurier to Nepean, February 19th 1793

Normandy and the Vendée – particularly the supply of money and arms – were conducted via old smuggling methods (see chapters eight and nine).¹⁵⁶⁴

Consequently, as suggested by D'Auvergne's complaint concerning 'rogue' agents within *La Correspondence*,¹⁵⁶⁵ the 'suppression' of the Channel Islands smugglers appears to have been primarily a case of redirection rather than annihilation. It may be argued, of course, that the Continental System never seriously threatened Britain's economic stability: according to Olson Jr., the British government imported 1,306,441 quarters of grain from the Continent at a time when annual grain consumption was 10,000,000 quarters.¹⁵⁶⁶ Similarly, Gregory stresses that British occupation of Madeira provided the merchant fleet with a crucial staging post and a lever with which to 'prise open the South American markets'.¹⁵⁶⁷ However, while Crouzet also concedes that 'complete closure of the Continent to British goods by France was [only ever] a pipedream', he also maintains that 'a partial closure could have serious effects' in relation to social disorder and economic stability.¹⁵⁶⁸ As such, it remained necessary for the British to seek a means of dismantling of the Continental System: not only for the purpose of sowing discord between France and her allies, but also to provide an additional insurance policy with respect to protecting the integrity of the British economy.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I. pp. 170-171

¹⁵⁶⁵ TNA, WO 1/925/177, D'Auvergne to Cooke, September 20th 1808

¹⁵⁶⁶ Olson Jr., *Economics of Wartime Shortage*, p. 64-5

¹⁵⁶⁷ Gregory, *Madeira*, p. 53

¹⁵⁶⁸ F. Crouzet, 'The British Economy at the Time of Trafalgar: Strengths and Weaknesses', in D. Cannadine, (ed.), *Trafalgar in History*, p. 13

Napoleon's Use of the Channel Islands Smugglers

However, the nature of the Channel Islands' involvement in economic warfare was ultimately a double-edged sword, since it was not only the British who attempted to make use of their advantageous position and the skills of their smugglers. Napoleon can be seen to have also made a concerted attempt to procure the assistance of the Channel Islanders in subverting the British blockade, preying upon the above-mentioned opposition to the Anti-Smuggling Acts.¹⁵⁶⁹ Mirroring the actions of the *Ancien Regime* in 1767, the Emperor sought to encourage British and Channel Islands' smugglers to transfer operations to French ports, and between 1810 and 1814, declared both Dunkirk and Gravelines to be free ports.¹⁵⁷⁰ As in 1767, the objective of this move was to weaken the British economy by engineering a flood of British gold into French banks,¹⁵⁷¹ and certainly, the losses of gold resulting from this tactic were severe. According to Daly's figures, 1,876,617 guineas were smuggled into Gravelines in the first nine months of 1811, while 1,607,119 guineas arrived during the course of 1813.¹⁵⁷² However, such losses were counterbalanced by the flexibility of the British credit system and the robustness of native agriculture and manufacturing,¹⁵⁷³ and it is also possible that a significant proportion of the contraband currency found its way into the coffers of Wellington's army.

While Daly's investigation has added much to our understanding of Napoleon's efforts to undermine the British war effort, an investigation of the smuggling activities taking place in the Channel Islands highlights the extent to which

¹⁵⁶⁹ GSG, A/IV/80/16, 'Letter from Agents to the Guernsey Chamber of Commerce', September 25th 1809

¹⁵⁷⁰ G. Daly, 'Napoleon and the 'City of Smugglers, 1810-14'', *THJ*, 50:2 (2007) 333

¹⁵⁷¹ J. Black, *Naval Power: A History of Warfare and the Sea from 1500* (London, 1999) p. 111

¹⁵⁷² Daly, 'City of Smugglers', 345

¹⁵⁷³ Crouzet, 'The British Economy', pp. 15-16

French recruitment of British smugglers existed before 1810. For example, agents were able to exploit a serious loophole which emerged in the aftermath of the extension of the retaliatory Orders in Council to the Channel Islands. While Governor Le Mesurier pledged eventually to put an end to smuggling in Alderney,¹⁵⁷⁴ it appears that the original Orders – lodged with the respective Greffiers of the States of Jersey¹⁵⁷⁵ and Guernsey¹⁵⁷⁶ in late 1807 – were not extended to the third island. Consequently, as reported by Lieutenant Leabon of the 67th Regt. of Foot, ‘it was generally understood that the people of [Guernsey] had transferred the illicit trade to [Alderney], where they found agents to superintend this smuggling’.¹⁵⁷⁷ However, the Island also became a backdoor for French agents: in 1808, for example, Doyle reported that eight members of the 67th Regt had deserted, and had been borne away to France’.¹⁵⁷⁸ A few months later, Don sent word to Hatton – his counterpart at Alderney – warning him that two French spies had recently fled Jersey, and were suspected to be using the former island as a staging-post from whence to make their escape.¹⁵⁷⁹

The Final Assessment

Overall, it may be clearly seen that the Channel Islands – both before and after the watershed year of 1805 – proved able to involve themselves effectively in the wider context of the economic war. While it is important not to over-estimate

¹⁵⁷⁴ GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letter from Government House, June 4th 1809

¹⁵⁷⁵ SJA, L/F/95/A/27, ‘Don to Doyle Concerning the Sending of Recruits to the Channel Islands, an Order in Council Concerning Imports from France to Jersey and a Memorandum Relating to Alderney’, December 7th 1807

¹⁵⁷⁶ GSG, A/II/39, ‘Orders in Council dated August 15th 1807 and December 7th 1807’

¹⁵⁷⁷ G. Leabon, *A Narrative of Facts Connected with the Military System and Illicit Trade of a Part of the Channel Islands* (London, 1812), cited in Fay, *Channel Islands and Newfoundland*, pp. 62-63

¹⁵⁷⁸ GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letter from Government House, March 6th 1808

¹⁵⁷⁹ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of August 25th 1808

the impact on the Channel blockade, possession of the bailiwicks can be seen to have provided the British with a significant strategic advantage over the enemy. Certainly, naval vessels and privateers operating out of the Channel Islands could never expect to receive the same degree of direct support that they might receive from bases in the Mediterranean,¹⁵⁸⁰ and even local hired vessels were often obliged to put into British ports for repairs.¹⁵⁸¹ However, it must be noted that small vessels could at least use Guernsey Roads as an anchorage for taking on fresh water and other essentials, reducing their time off-station and narrowing the 'window of opportunity' during which an enemy force might 'slip' out of Cherbourg or other ports (see chapter nine).¹⁵⁸² For this reason, the local commanders took great pains to ensure that the captains of any ships reported absent from their station were brought to account,¹⁵⁸³ and ensured that additional vessels were ordered to patrol between the Channel Islands and the French coast when the blockade was weakest.¹⁵⁸⁴

Not only has it been demonstrated that the Channel Islands' vessels were able to participate in support of the Royal Navy's principal blockade activities, but it can be argued that they provided an essential subsidiary service. It is true that many contemporary critics of the privateering trade accused captains and *armateurs* of focusing too readily upon the taking of 'easy prizes...of small tonnage and little value'.¹⁵⁸⁵ However, when one considers the importance of blockade warfare within Britain's maritime strategy,¹⁵⁸⁶ it becomes clear that the

¹⁵⁸⁰ Greenwood, 'James, Lord de Saumarez 1757-1836', pp. 256-258; and ADM 1/222, Saumarez to Nepean, July 18th 1803

¹⁵⁸¹ TNA, FO 95/611, D'Auvergne to Windham, December 10th 1799

¹⁵⁸² SROI, SA 3/1/7/18, Elias Gaudin to Saumarez, May 30th 1803 and Entry for July 6th 1803; and SJA, L/F/106/A/1, Don to Saumarez, August 16th 1806

¹⁵⁸³ SROI, SA 3/1/7/19, Entry for October 24th 1803

¹⁵⁸⁴ Ibid, Entries for October 27th 1803 and November 1st 1803

¹⁵⁸⁵ Raban, 'Channel Island Privateering', 287-299

¹⁵⁸⁶ Best, *War and Society*, p. 145

captures made by the Bailiwicks' vessels – and by those commerce-raiders from other ports – were significant nonetheless. As Raban states, the Navy simply could not spare the resources needed to suppress the convoys preyed upon by the Channel Islands' vessels,¹⁵⁸⁷ while the latter were also able to chase down convoys that sought refuge in shallow waters.¹⁵⁸⁸ In effect, the light vessels based in the bailiwicks were able to act as a 'force multiplier' for the main blockade, inflicting pressure upon the French mercantile fleet¹⁵⁸⁹ and upon those communities dependent upon coastal trade.¹⁵⁹⁰ Indeed, it can be reasonably concluded that the depredation of the Islands privateers (see chapter six), together with the local scouts and cruisers, contributed directly to the crippling rise in food prices in areas such as the Charente¹⁵⁹¹ and the hinterland of Cherbourg and Brest.¹⁵⁹²

In addition, while the impact of the Channel blockade was lessened by France's continental hegemony and resultant access to the resources of 'client states', attempts to transport these supplies by sea remained under threat as long as the Channel Islands remained in British hands. As Dumouriez highlights, the danger posed by the local privateers and scouts to the convoys delivering naval stores, arms and ammunition to Brest¹⁵⁹³ forced the French to provide armed escorts to all coastwise traders¹⁵⁹⁴ and trans-Atlantic convoys.¹⁵⁹⁵ Hand-in-hand with the disruption of the enemy's maritime supply routes and the interception of

¹⁵⁸⁷ Raban, 'Channel Island Privateering', 287-299

¹⁵⁸⁸ Rose and Broadley (eds.), *Dumouriez and the Defence of England*, p. 319

¹⁵⁸⁹ TNA, HO 98/11, Don to Portland, May 22nd 1806

¹⁵⁹⁰ SJA, L/A/38/A1, Entry for March 25th 1797

¹⁵⁹¹ TNA, WO 1/603, 'Information from Two Men, Escaped from French Prison, and Arrived at Jersey', April 8th 1795

¹⁵⁹² TNA, WO 1/607, 'Letter to Gordon Containing a Declaration of Mr. John Roissier, Master of the *Mayflower*, and Richard Le Fevre, his Mate', February 12th 1797

¹⁵⁹³ TNA, HO 69/3, Stephens to D'Auvergne, June 9th 1794; and TNA WO 1/607, Anon to Gordon, February 12th 1797

¹⁵⁹⁴ Rose and Broadley (eds.), *Dumouriez and the Defence of England*, p. 319

¹⁵⁹⁵ TNA, HO 98/27, Doyle to Pelham, March 10th 1803

her mercantile fleet, possession of the Channel Islands also permitted the British government to exploit the local smugglers as a means to circumvent Napoleon's Continental System. While this stratagem was by no means a complete success – towards the end of the War, it is evident that many local smugglers proved willing to operate out of Gravelines and Dunkirk¹⁵⁹⁶ – it is clear that the Channel Islands provided an effective conduit for facilitating clandestine British trade. In addition, the members of Jersey's Chamber of Commerce reported that the clandestine licensed trade with the opposite coast had brought in a handsome profit for the island's merchants, with one estimate suggesting a more than one hundred percent return on investment.¹⁵⁹⁷

Finally, while it is tempting to view the latter part of the Great French War as being dominated by a struggle between French strength on land and British strength at sea, such a view ignores the fact that the French Navy continued to pose a threat to British commercial and mercantile traffic.¹⁵⁹⁸ Although Villeneuve's inability to unite with the Brest Fleet had been a deciding factor at Trafalgar, the survival of that force as a 'fleet in being' obliged the Royal Navy to maintain its blockade of that port.¹⁵⁹⁹ In addition, it must be remembered that the period 1805-15 saw Napoleon expend considerable resources in an effort to restore the French Navy to its previous strength,¹⁶⁰⁰ with over forty large warships being recorded as under construction at various ports by the time of his exile to Elba.¹⁶⁰¹ Consequently, although Trafalgar may have heralded a decline in the importance of the Channel Islands as a bulwark against a

¹⁵⁹⁶ TNA, FO 95/609, D'Auvergne to Huskisson, January 8th 1799; and SA 3/1/3, Don to Saumarez, March 7th 1808

¹⁵⁹⁷ SJA, A/A1/6, Letters of December 18th 1810 and October 30th 1811

¹⁵⁹⁸ Morieux, *The Channel*, p. 108

¹⁵⁹⁹ Black, *Britain as a Military Power*, pp. 235 and 270

¹⁶⁰⁰ Rodger, 'The Significance of Trafalgar', p. 84

¹⁶⁰¹ Black, *Britain as a Military Power*, p. 222

potential invasion of Britain, it had little impact on their significance within the wider context of the war at sea.¹⁶⁰² Moreover, the proximity of the bailiwicks to the Breton-Norman coast – although leaving them vulnerable to assault even by a force deprived of the support of a battle fleet (see chapter three) – ensured that the Channel Islands remained highly valued as a conduit for the gathering of intelligence, especially with respect to enemy naval preparations.¹⁶⁰³

¹⁶⁰² Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and British Maritime Strategy', p. 227

¹⁶⁰³ TNA, FO 95/609, 'Substance of Communication of the Movements at Brest, December 30th 1798 to January 15th 1799, Received at Jersey on 31st January 1799'

Section III – Clandestine and Covert Operations

Chapter Eight – Intelligence-Gathering: Reconnaissance and Espionage

As highlighted by Davies in his recent revisionist study of military intelligence during the Peninsular War, it has been all too often assumed that this aspect of warfare became significant only after the development of mechanised transportation and the development of the electronic telegraph. However, although it is true that neither the government nor the military ‘struggled’ to establish new intelligence-gathering networks only when new conflicts broke out, investment in this area, even in peacetime, ‘represented a large portion of government expenditure’.¹⁶⁰⁴ Indeed, although no attempt was made by the British government to create a department with the specific task of collecting foreign intelligence,¹⁶⁰⁵ the 1780s saw considerable charges made to the Civil List in relation to ‘Secret Service Business’. Between 1782 and 1794 the average annual outlay of the Foreign Office with respect to overseas intelligence-gathering was estimated at £25,000, while the Home Office expended a total of £50,571 between June 1791 and March 1795. However, it must be noted that the latter was concerned primarily with the collection of information relating to domestic security concerns; as demonstrated by the fact that the combined ‘Foreign Secret Service’ outlay for the two departments in 1790 totalled only £26,221 0s 6d.¹⁶⁰⁶

Throughout the 1780s, an embryonic British ‘Secret Service’ was thus active in many parts of France: in 1789, the government was obliged to issue formal

¹⁶⁰⁴ Davies, ‘British Intelligence’, p. 1

¹⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 32

¹⁶⁰⁶ Cobban, ‘The British Secret Service’, 233-6; and Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 127

denunciations of a rumour that a considerable amount of capital was being expended to 'forment disorder in the Capital and Provinces'.¹⁶⁰⁷ However, in addition to the information provided by these sources, it had been customary for diplomats and envoys to act as intelligence officers in all but name, with consuls being used during 1792 as a means to gain information on preparations undertaken by the French and Spanish navies.¹⁶⁰⁸ Unfortunately, much of the intelligence received was of only limited reliability,¹⁶⁰⁹ and as Knight observed, this problem was never fully overcome; not only did ministers never possess a coherent intelligence picture, but the reliability of sources was difficult to assess, and information was often misinterpreted.¹⁶¹⁰ Consequently, at the outbreak of the War of the Second Coalition, Duffy has described the British government as having felt 'uncomfortably naked' at their lack of intelligence concerning the status of the Brest Fleet in 1799.¹⁶¹¹ Likewise, Davey has highlighted that a breakdown in the relationship between Sir Sidney Smith and Lord Keith in 1803 was triggered by a series of 'infrequent and increasingly bizzare reports' sent in by the former, leading Keith to dismiss subsequent intelligence as 'touched up' and 'based on the tales of shopkeepers'.¹⁶¹²

Aside from the difficulties involved within the basic task of intelligence-gathering, Knight has also pointed out that British ministers '[never] came near to understanding the erratic minds of those who took strategic decisions' in France, and particularly during the Directory (1795-99).¹⁶¹³ As highlighted by both Cobban and King, this was the principal context within which the Channel

¹⁶⁰⁷ Cobban, 'British Secret Service', 226-7, 230

¹⁶⁰⁸ Davies, 'British Intelligence', pp. 4-5; and Sparrow, *Secret Service*, p. 269

¹⁶⁰⁹ Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and British Maritime Strategy', p. 224

¹⁶¹⁰ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 151

¹⁶¹¹ M. Duffy, 'British Intelligence and the Breakout of the French Atlantic Fleet from Brest in 1799', *INS* 22:5 (2007) 603

¹⁶¹² Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, p. 61

¹⁶¹³ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 151

Islands could be exploited as an 'intelligence hub', since their proximity to the Breton-Norman coast allowed the bailiwicks to serve as a 'natural centre for the collection of virtually 'all the news' from that quarter'.¹⁶¹⁴ More importantly, the ability to use the Channel Islands as a staging post meant that reports received from land-based agents under D'Auvergne's direction could be more promptly compared with those received from patrolling frigates and scouts, enabling the Admiralty to better assess the reliability of intelligence.¹⁶¹⁵ In late August 1796, for example, D'Auvergne forwarded two separate reports on the enemy force at Brest:¹⁶¹⁶ one, dated the 17th, gave a total of ten ships-of-the-line, eight frigates, two *razées* and five corvettes; the other, dated the 25th, recorded nine ships-of-the-line, one *razée*, five frigates and one brig. This information closely matched that submitted by Sir John Warren at Falmouth at the beginning of the month: scouting Brest on August 3rd, he reported having seen 'ten sail-of-the-line, two *razées*, six frigates, four corvettes, and a Danish ship-of-war'.¹⁶¹⁷

The importance of exploiting the natural advantages offered by the Channel Islands with respect to intelligence-gathering was rendered more evident after 1803, the latter half of the Great French War characterised by a widening of the gulf between British and French operations. This was typified by the development of the Depillon semaphore, installed along the whole of the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts and, according to Knight, 'much more visible and capable of sending any message than the [contemporary] British system'.¹⁶¹⁸ Moreover, Napoleon's successes during the War of the Third Coalition placed ever-greater restrictions upon Britain's continental intelligence-

¹⁶¹⁴ Cobban, 'Channel Islands' Correspondence', 38; and King, 'Jersey: Centre D'Espionnage', 424

¹⁶¹⁵ Duffy, 'British Intelligence', 603

¹⁶¹⁶ TNA, ADM 1/6033, 'Extract of Information Transmitted by D'Auvergne', August 1796

¹⁶¹⁷ Ibid, 'Information Communicated by Sir J.B. Warren, off Falmouth', August 7th 1796

¹⁶¹⁸ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 301

gathering methods, with Hall's assessment of the situation in 1807 being particularly pessimistic. While acknowledging the presence of 'friendly agents' throughout Europe, he concluded that 'there is little to suggest that [they achieved] any great success', pointing out that even D'Auvergne's agents were criticised for producing 'deficient' reports.¹⁶¹⁹ Perhaps the worst failure had occurred in 1799, when Bruix' squadron had escaped from Brest: although it later emerged that accurate information had been obtained, this had been 'buried in a mass of contradictory reports',¹⁶²⁰ and D'Auvergne was obliged to place a 'new and intelligent person' on the Brest station.¹⁶²¹

Likewise, while the dissemination of intelligence may have allowed the British government to draw upon a range of sources and ensure that at least *some* reports would reach their destination,¹⁶²² the effectiveness of this policy depended the cooperation of departments and personnel.¹⁶²³ Unfortunately, as was evident in both the Mediterranean and the Vendée, where tensions arose between both ministers and agents, it is evident that 'internal jealousies' led all too often to a breakdown of the system.¹⁶²⁴ In the Channel Islands, perhaps the clearest demonstration of the extent to which such petty rivalries might handicap effective intelligence-gathering occurred in late 1794, following the appointment of D'Auvergne as director of *La Correspondence* (see chapter nine).¹⁶²⁵ Not only did Falle regard this network as a rival to that which he had been operating for almost two years (see below), but the fact that his new colleague answered directly to Whitehall, rather than to himself as Lieutenant-

¹⁶¹⁹ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 47

¹⁶²⁰ Duffy, 'British Intelligence', 614-615

¹⁶²¹ TNA, FO 95/612/24, D'Auvergne to Nepean, November 27th 1799

¹⁶²² Davies, 'British Intelligence', pp. 203 and 205

¹⁶²³ TNA, WO 1/608, 'Notes to Assist Captain Dumaesq in Answering the Questions that May be Put to Him by Government', undated

¹⁶²⁴ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, pp. 126 and 128

¹⁶²⁵ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, pp. 57-58

Governor (see chapter one),¹⁶²⁶ was interpreted by the latter as a direct challenge to his authority. Ultimately, cooperation between the two officers was ensured – D’Auvergne being granted permission to use *Mont Orgueil* as a headquarters for his activities (see chapter nine) – but the dispute had been ended only after an appeal had been made to Dundas to act as mediator.¹⁶²⁷

Initial Exploitation of the Channel Islands

With respect to the Great French War, the earliest attempts to make use of the Channel Islands as a base for intelligence-gathering were undertaken in December 1792, principally at the suggestion of Falle, then Lieutenant-Governor of Jersey.¹⁶²⁸ Amid growing fears of hostilities with the Republic, he had sought permission to establish a local intelligence network,¹⁶²⁹ and had been instructed to send ‘suitable persons conversant with shipping’ to reconnoitre St. Malo, L’Orient, Rochefort, Cherbourg, Brest, Bordeaux and Granville.¹⁶³⁰ However, the importance of these operations was also recognised by the other local commanders: in May 1793, Craig reported that he had ‘with great difficulty succeeded in getting a young man to St. Malo and back again’,¹⁶³¹ while Le Mesurier had recruited a man to ‘boldly carry a flag of truce to Cherbourg’. With respect to the latter agent, not only was it intended that he should obtain ‘extraordinary intelligence’ which might be transmitted to Jersey and Guernsey, but he was also tasked with locating four islanders then under

¹⁶²⁶ TNA, WO 1/608, ‘Notes to Assist Captain Dumaresq’, undated

¹⁶²⁷ TNA, WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, October 31st 1794; and FO 95/604/1, D’Auvergne to Dundas, November 4th 1794

¹⁶²⁸ TNA, HO 98/3, Falle to Dundas, undated, 1792

¹⁶²⁹ King, ‘The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists’, p. 52

¹⁶³⁰ TNA, HO 98/3, Correspondence between Falle and Nepean, January 4th, 13th and 21st and February 18th 1793

¹⁶³¹ Ibid, Craig to Dundas, May 5th 1793

arrest in Cherbourg, who might provide information pertaining to the attitude of the inhabitants towards the National Convention.¹⁶³²

Although it must be acknowledged that these initial operations were undertaken by only a handful of agents – Falle being particularly scrupulous with respect to their selection¹⁶³³ – the intelligence thus obtained was of crucial importance in terms of corroborating information received from other quarters. As highlighted by Davies, it is necessary to draw a distinction between general reports on the enemy's preparations and intentions – which he terms as 'strategic intelligence' – and more detailed information concerning the enemy's strengths, arms and morale, which he terms as 'operational intelligence'.¹⁶³⁴ By early 1793, the British had built up a great deal of the former type: Nepean stating that he possessed a list of 'the whole navy of France',¹⁶³⁵ while copies of French newspapers obtained by the Admiralty provided the names and armament of vessels in various ports. However, it was through the Channel Islands – and specifically Alderney – that sufficient 'operational intelligence' was obtained as to enable the accurate analysis of this information, and the assessment of the actual preparedness of the French Navy for war.¹⁶³⁶ For example, although *La Gazette de France* of March 16th 1793 listed fifty-four ships-of-the-line and twenty-five frigates as being stationed in Brest,¹⁶³⁷ a member of a cartel arriving in Alderney the following week revealed that no more than twenty-five of these vessels were ready for sea.¹⁶³⁸

¹⁶³² TNA, HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Nepean, February 19th 1793

¹⁶³³ TNA, HO 98/3, Falle to Nepean, January 21st 1793

¹⁶³⁴ Davies, 'British Intelligence', Abstract

¹⁶³⁵ TNA, HO 98/3, Nepean to Falle, January 13th 1793

¹⁶³⁶ TNA, HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Nepean, March 1st, 17th, 22nd, 23rd and 24th 1793

¹⁶³⁷ TNA, ADM 1/6032, 'State of the Navy of the French Republic as Contained Within the *Gazette de France*', March 16th 1793

¹⁶³⁸ TNA, HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Nepean, March 24th 1793

In addition to obtaining information relating to the enemy's preparations for war, it was also recognised that the Channel Islands might offer the British an opportunity to obtain a more accurate picture concerning the stability of the Western Provinces. As has been already highlighted, those *émigrés* who had taken refuge in the Channel Islands during late 1792 and early 1793 found themselves treated with considerable hostility,¹⁶³⁹ especially after Falle's discovery of a cache of arms intended for delivery to the royalist armies (see chapter five). However, while it had been necessary for the British government to disavow any involvement with the insurgency, it must be remembered that the *émigré* leaders regarded the Channel Islands as their most convenient refuge,¹⁶⁴⁰ and that 'every *émigré* and sailor brought...stories of exciting happenings on the Continent'.¹⁶⁴¹ Although many of these reports were tainted by rumour and hearsay, the nature of intelligence-gathering meant that – as highlighted during the response to Bruix' escape from Brest – even the most experienced British spymasters were restricted to 'dealing in probabilities rather than certainties'.¹⁶⁴² No potential source of information could be ignored, and in May 1793, Craig dispatched an agent to the coast of Brittany, instructing him 'to obtain the most exact information of the state of that part of the country, [and] to make himself perfectly master of everything that is going on at Brest'.¹⁶⁴³

Amongst the *émigré* community, there appears to have been no shortage of volunteers willing to assist in the opening of communication with their

¹⁶³⁹ TNA, HO 98/24, Dundas to Anon, January 30th 1793

¹⁶⁴⁰ De Beauchamp, *Histoire de la Guerre de la Vendée et des Chouans*, Tome I, p. 129; and Desbrière, *Projects et Tentatives*, Tome I, pp. 59-61

¹⁶⁴¹ King, 'The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists', pp. 53-54

¹⁶⁴² Duffy, 'British Intelligence', 604

¹⁶⁴³ HO 98/3, Craig to Nepean, May 28th 1793

compatriots,¹⁶⁴⁴ however, as Craig acknowledged, their success remained dependent on favourable conditions and luck as much as ability.¹⁶⁴⁵ Indeed, with the exception of the abovementioned ‘intelligent man’, almost all attempts by Craig’s agents met with failure, and he remained ‘almost wholly ignorant’ of the situation in Brittany beyond the hinterland of St. Malo.¹⁶⁴⁶ Even so, the limited information obtained through these initial attempts at communication did, on occasion, provide sufficient evidence to corroborate reports received by the British government from other quarters with respect to dissatisfaction in Brittany.¹⁶⁴⁷ Indeed, while Craig’s report of May 5th indicated that ‘the commotion on the coast of Brittany has subsided’, and that it was ‘uncertain’ as to whether the adjacent areas of Normandy had witnessed any widespread disturbance, indications of general discontent seemed well-founded.¹⁶⁴⁸ Since at least the beginning of March, reports had been received from Paris concerning the hostility of the inhabitants of the Western Provinces towards the *levée en masse*, with estimates placing the number of recruits raised at only 60,000 recruits instead of the projected 300,000.¹⁶⁴⁹

Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that the *ad hoc* employment of the *émigrés* and royalists – while certainly a necessity prior to the formal creation of *La Correspondence* (see chapter nine)¹⁶⁵⁰ – was an inexact process, and risked an overreliance on spurious sources.¹⁶⁵¹ During the spring of 1793, for example, a large number of *émigrés* arriving at Jersey spoke of the ‘dizzying successes’

¹⁶⁴⁴ Hampson, *La Marine de l’An II*, p. 92

¹⁶⁴⁵ HO 98/3, Craig to Dundas, April 30th 1793

¹⁶⁴⁶ King, ‘The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists’, p. 57

¹⁶⁴⁷ TNA, HO 98/3, Dundas to Craig, April 28th, 1793

¹⁶⁴⁸ Ibid, Craig to Dundas, May 5th 1793

¹⁶⁴⁹ TNA, WO 1/391, ‘Extract of a Letter from Mr. Martin to Baron Gilliers’, March 4th 1793; and ‘Extract of a Letter from Mr. Blanchardy’s Correspondent’, March 12th 1793

¹⁶⁵⁰ King, ‘The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists’, pp. 65-66

¹⁶⁵¹ Duffy, ‘British Intelligence’, 602; and Hampson, *La Marine de l’An II*, p. 64

enjoyed by a former republican officer who was said to have defected to the royalists,¹⁶⁵² and who was later described by De Beauchamp as '*un prétendu Gaston, personnage fabuleux*'.¹⁶⁵³ Indeed, while the legends surrounding Gaston were likely based on the actions of a real person, any truth in the rumours were obscured by absurd exaggerations; for example, he was said to command 200,000 men, to have captured Nantes, and to be marching on Orleans and even Paris.¹⁶⁵⁴ Consequently, the episode demonstrated the importance of the Channel Islands as a centre for the collation and analysis of intelligence,¹⁶⁵⁵ since the local authorities made a concerted effort to obtain a true picture of the situation, sending two agents to Brittany to make contact with Gaston.¹⁶⁵⁶ Moreover, Craig dismissed reports that Gaston had attacked Nantes, and doubted that he could be in command of even 35,000 men;¹⁶⁵⁷ indeed, after consultation with several 'intelligence persons', it was decided that Gaston could not possibly muster more than 10,000 or 20,000 men.¹⁶⁵⁸

The Channel Islands as an 'Intelligence Hub'

Such advantages as were offered by the Channel Islands in relation to solving the problems of intelligence-gathering become especially clear when one considers the restrictions placed upon the Royal Navy, both before and after Trafalgar. While the naval victories of 1793-1805 have been often portrayed as having ensured British maritime supremacy,¹⁶⁵⁹ they did not eliminate the

¹⁶⁵² Gabory, *L'Angleterre et la Vendée*, Vol. I, p. 56

¹⁶⁵³ De Beauchamp, *Histoire de la Guerre de la Vendée et des Chouans*, Tome I, p. 129

¹⁶⁵⁴ Gabory, *L'Angleterre et la Vendée*, Vol. I, p. 56

¹⁶⁵⁵ Davies, 'British Intelligence', p. 25

¹⁶⁵⁶ Cobban, 'Channel Islands' Correspondence', 43-44; and Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 103

¹⁶⁵⁷ TNA, HO 98/3, Craig to Dundas, May 5th 1793

¹⁶⁵⁸ Ibid, Craig to Anon, May 5th 1793

¹⁶⁵⁹ Davey, *In Nelson's Wake*, pp. 12-13

potential threat posed to her merchant convoys, either from the Brest Fleet or from opportunistic raiding squadrons and privateers engaging in the *guerre de course* (see chapter seven).¹⁶⁶⁰ For example, the Baltic convoys supplied Britain with two-thirds of her grain imports, as well as crucial stocks of timber, hemp, pitch and tar for the repair of her ships,¹⁶⁶¹ and the necessity of ensuring their safe passage stretched the Royal Navy to its limits.¹⁶⁶² This was especially true with respect to its auxiliary craft, which were often viewed as being too few in number to fulfill the numerous duties demanded of them, such as the escorting of convoys and transports, the support of the Channel blockade, the patrolling of trade routes, and the carrying of dispatches.¹⁶⁶³ Just as Saumarez complained in November 1805 of having been forced to part with several vessels of his squadron,¹⁶⁶⁴ so the repetition of this situation on naval stations all around continental Europe served only to increase the importance of the prompt communication, analysis, and dissemination of intelligence.

In addition to the problem of sourcing sufficient vessels to act as the ‘eyes of the fleet’,¹⁶⁶⁵ the collation of intelligence was further hampered by the fact that hazards such as fog, heavy seas or contrary winds often made it impossible for contact to be maintained either with friendly vessels or the enemy.¹⁶⁶⁶ As a result, while it is true that the Channel Islands provided a ‘relay station’ for the naval scouts, ensuring the more regular transmission of reports (see below), they also provided the British government with access to a variety of other

¹⁶⁶⁰ TNA, WO 1/925/27, D’Auvergne to Shere, October 20th 1806; WO 55/1549/6, ‘Doyle’s Report re. Guernsey and Alderney’, undated; and SJA, A/A1/6, Letter of November 13th 1811

¹⁶⁶¹ Crouzet, ‘The British Economy at the Time of Trafalgar’, p. 13

¹⁶⁶² Black, *Naval Power*, pp. 99-100; and Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture*, p. 9

¹⁶⁶³ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of January 2nd 1807; and TNA, ADM 1/224, D’Auvergne to Pole, March 18th 1809

¹⁶⁶⁴ TNA, WO 1/605, Doyle to Hobart, November 24th 1805

¹⁶⁶⁵ Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, p. 112

¹⁶⁶⁶ Black, *Naval Power*, p. 109; Duffy, ‘British Intelligence’, 607; and Morriss, *The Channel Fleet*, p. 405

sources of intelligence. Their free port status was of particular value in this regard, since although it led to considerable friction between the inhabitants and the customs authorities (see chapter seven), the Channel Islands' position facilitated contact with numerous individuals who were *persona non-grata* in Britain. Not only did fishermen and merchants from neutral and enemy countries regularly arrive in the Channel Islands – either of their own free will or as a result of being detained by naval patrols¹⁶⁶⁷ – but smugglers also served as a valuable source of information, particularly if they were French or Dutch in origin.¹⁶⁶⁸ Indeed, even if these civilians were unable to supply detailed information concerning the enemy's actual preparations,¹⁶⁶⁹ Wellington's experience in the Peninsula proved that they might still provide advanced warning of enemy intentions in the event of an attack.¹⁶⁷⁰

The importance of securing the earliest possible intelligence of enemy preparations was emphasised in mid-1796, when Dalrymple expressed concerns that 'the people of this Island are so stuck in indolence and security that I fear they will take the alarm too late'.¹⁶⁷¹ It would appear that his concerns were justified: earlier that same month, intelligence had been received to the effect that Hoche had assembled 15,000 men at St. Malo, it being observed that 'the object of his expedition is avowedly against Jersey'.¹⁶⁷² Although a false alarm, subsequent information received from one of D'Auvergne's agents would seem to indicate this concentration of troops having been intended for the abortive Expedition to Ireland. According to a report received by D'Auvergne in

¹⁶⁶⁷ *NMM*, MSS/84/014/1, 'Orders from the Lord High Admiral', June 12th 1803

¹⁶⁶⁸ *TNA*, *TNA* HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Nepean, March 1st 1793; and ADM 1/6034, 'Report from Lieutenant Compton of *HMS Pilot*', June 17th 1798

¹⁶⁶⁹ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 47

¹⁶⁷⁰ Davies, 'British Intelligence', Abstract

¹⁶⁷¹ *TNA*, HO 69/11/42, Dalrymple to D'Auvergne, July 26th 1796

¹⁶⁷² *The Times*, July 9th 1796

September 1796, a forced levy of fishermen and seamen was being carried on 'with full vigour' on the neighbouring coast, while a force of corvettes, escorts and transports was being assembled at Brest.¹⁶⁷³ Moreover, as was noted in the discussion of the local fortification programme (see chapter three), the records of the French government reveal that the plans for the Expedition included a proposal to distract the attention of the Royal Navy by means of a diversionary assault against either Jersey or Guernsey.¹⁶⁷⁴

Another occasion when intelligence received via the Channel Islands served to alert the British government to a planned enemy expedition occurred in September 1801, when it was reported to that a significant naval force was once again being assembled at St. Malo. On the same day that the preliminary terms of peace were being signed in London (see chapter five), D'Auvergne reported that 'three frigates, five or six gun-brigs, the same number of cutters, and thirty-eight gun-vessels' were already prepared for sea, while as many as twenty other vessels were being 'prepared with great activity'. In addition, his agents provided detailed information of a forced levy – similar to that which had been enforced in Brittany the previous year¹⁶⁷⁵ – highlighting that 'four men out of nine are taken from each fishing boat on the coast of Normandy', their masters being pressed into service as pilots.¹⁶⁷⁶ Giving his opinion of this intelligence, Gordon informed his colleagues that he believed it to be 'tolerably accurate', and concluded that there was 'no doubt' that the French intended to carry out 'a general attack on His Majesty's Dominions'.¹⁶⁷⁷ Such a view was

¹⁶⁷³ TNA, PC 1/117B, Substance of the Information Received from Bertin, September 12th 1796

¹⁶⁷⁴ AN AF III, 420, Dossier 2355, Directory to the Minister of Marine, December 15th 1796; and AN AF III, 421, Dossier 2358, Directory to the Minister of Marine, December 17th 1796

¹⁶⁷⁵ NMM, COR/7, D'Auvergne to Dundas, August 21st 1800

¹⁶⁷⁶ TNA, WO 1/608, 'Extracts of Intelligence from the Prince of Bouillon', September 30th 1801

¹⁶⁷⁷ Ibid, Gordon to Hobart, September 27th 1801

given credence by several other sources: the Admiralty having been advised that ‘three frigates, one corvette, and two brig corvettes’ fitting out at Le Havre, and that sixteen ships-of-the-line – each with 400 men aboard – were assembled at Brest under Dordelin and Humbert.¹⁶⁷⁸

However, while Davey has argued that it provided ‘significant amounts of accurate intelligence’ to the Commanders of the Western Squadron,¹⁶⁷⁹ it is impossible to downplay the potential seriousness of the failure of 1799, or disagree with Duffy’s description of the episode as a ‘disaster’.¹⁶⁸⁰ Although D’Auvergne was not solely to blame for Bruix’ escape,¹⁶⁸¹ the fact remains that poor intelligence analysis had allowed twenty-six ships-of-the-line to roam at liberty,¹⁶⁸² with only the threat of a storm – during which three French ships collided¹⁶⁸³ – having prevented their engaging the British fleet.¹⁶⁸⁴ It is true that much of the evidence pointed to Ireland as the intended target: a ‘frequent and diligent communication’ was maintained between the French government and the Irish rebels,¹⁶⁸⁵ and Bruix had openly described Ireland as ‘easy prey’.¹⁶⁸⁶ However, as Knight has observed, the British government all too often made the mistake of assuming that French intentions mirrored what they themselves would do in the same situation,¹⁶⁸⁷ and forced to decide between reinforcing the Mediterranean or Ireland, they naturally ‘swallowed the bait’.¹⁶⁸⁸ Fortunately, the French were unable to capitalise on the situation: on May 6th, D’Auvergne

¹⁶⁷⁸ TNA, ADM 1/6035, ‘Intelligence from Brest and Le Havre’, September 16th and 25th 1801

¹⁶⁷⁹ Davey, *In Nelson’s Wake*, p. 60

¹⁶⁸⁰ Duffy, ‘British Intelligence’, 614-615

¹⁶⁸¹ Duffy, ‘The Establishment of the Western Squadron’, p. 78

¹⁶⁸² Morriss, *Naval Power and British Culture*, p. 23

¹⁶⁸³ Duffy, ‘British Intelligence’, 613

¹⁶⁸⁴ TNA, ADM 2/1355, D’Auvergne to Anon, June 3rd 1799

¹⁶⁸⁵ TNA, FO 95/605/108, D’Auvergne to Windham, January 30th 1799

¹⁶⁸⁶ TNA, FO 95/605/109, D’Auvergne to Windham, January 31st 1799

¹⁶⁸⁷ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 151

¹⁶⁸⁸ Duffy, ‘British Intelligence’, 605

reported having 'no doubts' that the enemy's true destination was either Cadiz or Cartenega,¹⁶⁸⁹ and although Bruix' Franco-Spanish fleet¹⁶⁹⁰ succeeded in reaching Toulon, they were quickly blockaded by St. Vincent.¹⁶⁹¹

The Channel Islands Scouts – Types of Hired Vessels

At the time of the Great French War, the term 'cruiser' was generally used to refer to any of the plethora of smaller vessels employed by the Royal Navy to carry out all those duties for which a ship-of-the-line or frigate was too large, cumbersome or slow. Consequently, while they may have been unable to stand in the line of battle or play even in a supporting role in major fleet actions,¹⁶⁹² these vessels were viewed nonetheless as being vital for the success of maritime operations. However, opinion was divided as to what the precise role of the 'cruiser' should be: while Nelson and some of his contemporaries saw these vessels as an additional instrument of control and power projection, the orthodox opinion conceived of their principal role as being to serve as 'the eyes of the fleet'.¹⁶⁹³ With regards to the 'cruisers' based in the Channel Islands, these vessels can be seen to have undertaken both roles, taking advantage of the fact that St. Malo could be reached from both Guernsey and Jersey in a single tide, and Cherbourg from Alderney in three hours or less if conditions were favourable.¹⁶⁹⁴ Consequently, there was ample opportunity for local armed scouts such as the *Friend*, *Rose*, *Duke of York* and *Albion* to both conduct

¹⁶⁸⁹ TNA, FO 95/609, D'Auvergne to Huskisson, Letter of May 6th 1799

¹⁶⁹⁰ Bruix had succeeded in linking up with nine Spanish vessels.

¹⁶⁹¹ TNA, ADM 2/1355, D'Auvergne to Anon, June 3rd 1799

¹⁶⁹² J.J. Widén, *Theorist of Maritime Strategy: Sir Julian Corbett and his Contribution to Military and Naval Thought* (Abingdon, 2016) p. 25

¹⁶⁹³ Ibid, p. 145

¹⁶⁹⁴ SJA, L/F/95/B/9, Don to 'My Dear Sir', October 27th 1811

‘passive’ reconnaissance missions in support of the Royal Navy’s operations¹⁶⁹⁵ and to engage in power projection activities such as the threatening of enemy coastal shipping and trade (see chapter seven).¹⁶⁹⁶

As such, it is evident that the local commanders were quick to follow the Royal Navy’s lead in hiring local civilian craft to augment the local naval force and compensate for the inability of the Channel Squadron to provide dedicated year-round support to the defence of the bailiwicks. However, a close examination of the types of craft employed demonstrates that they were fully aware of their advantages as reconnaissance vessels, as well as their specific strengths with respect to local operations.¹⁶⁹⁷ The first type of craft, the lugger, is described by Ashelford as having been particularly favoured by D’Auvergne, both because of its being easily handled in rough conditions and a fast sailor when running before the wind.¹⁶⁹⁸ Moreover, their sturdy construction made them well-suited both to the task of conveying confidential agents to and from the opposite coast and, in the course of this service, ‘annoying the alongshore trade of the enemy’, since they proved able to ride out the rough weather which so often delayed the operations of *La Correspondence*.¹⁶⁹⁹ Even so, it appears that these vessels were intended primarily to carry aid to the royalists, not the collection of intelligence; while they had ‘rendered essential services in former years’, D’Auvergne admitted that they were ‘of heavy expense to government’ if engaged solely in reconnaissance.¹⁷⁰⁰

¹⁶⁹⁵ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of October 21st 1811

¹⁶⁹⁶ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of March 20th 1807

¹⁶⁹⁷ SROI, SA 3/1/7/18, Saumarez to the Admiralty, June 3rd 1803

¹⁶⁹⁸ Ashelford, *In the English Service*, p. 61

¹⁶⁹⁹ TNA, ADM 1/221, Letter of August 18th 1795; PC 1/117B, D’Auvergne to Dundas, December 20th 1796; and WO 1/922/237, D’Auvergne to Dundas, September 8th 1797

¹⁷⁰⁰ BL, Add MS 37866, D’Auvergne to Windham, October 26th 1799

By contrast, the cutter was a far more versatile: carrying fore-and-aft rigs and multiple headsails, this vessel was designed to be able to travel at speed whilst sailing both into and before the wind.¹⁷⁰¹ As can be seen from the orders given by Saumarez to the captains of various cutters attached to his squadron while on the Channel Islands station, this adaptability made them ideal for fulfilling the dual role of scouts and interceptors. Not only might these vessels 'give the earliest information' of any attempt to slip through the blockade, but their speed and manoeuvrability enabled them to harass or otherwise delay the enemy until such time as reinforcements could be dispatched.¹⁷⁰² In 1804, for example, the *Duke of York* (cutter, 8 guns) was ordered to accompany *HMS Charwell* (corvette, 2 guns, 14 carronades) in a cruise off Cape Carteret 'for the purpose of intercepting and destroying the enemy'.¹⁷⁰³ Likewise, following the escape of an enemy force from Carteret, the *Duke of Clarence* (cutter, 6 guns) was detached in company with the *Sylph* (brig-sloop, 18 guns) and *Conquest* (gun-brig, 14 guns) with orders to destroy the flotilla or check its progress.¹⁷⁰⁴ Finally, it is also evident that the cutter was ideally suited to act as a rescue craft: in 1809, for example, the *Queen Charlotte* (cutter, 8 guns) successfully recovered the Jersey smack *Property*, which had foundered, dismasted, off Corbiere, the crew being forced to abandon ship.¹⁷⁰⁵

The final type of hired vessel which saw widespread service in the Channel Islands was the *schuyt*: a flat-bottomed barge of Dutch design which came to the particular attention of the British government following the failed Walcheren Expedition (1809). During the course of the subsequent parliamentary debate,

¹⁷⁰¹ Douch, *Flogging Joe's Warriors*, pp. 27-28

¹⁷⁰² *SROI*, SA 3/1/7/19, Orders to Lieutenant Creighton, *HMS Nimble*, October 27th 1803

¹⁷⁰³ *TNA*, PC 1/4503, Saumarez to D'Auvergne, May 6th 1804

¹⁷⁰⁴ *Ibid*, Saumarez to D'Auvergne, October 5th 1804

¹⁷⁰⁵ *TNA*, PC 1/4504, White to D'Auvergne, December 25th 1809

Brownrigg highlighted that a number of *schuyts* had been employed to considerable effect by the Duke of York, the vessels being used primarily to land troops deep inland, behind French lines, and thus threaten the enemy's supply chain.¹⁷⁰⁶ However, the potential value of the *schuyt* with respect to the requirements of the Channel Islands scouts was recognised far earlier in the War, particularly in light of their shallow draft, light construction, and ability to be powered by oars as well as sails. As D'Auvergne observed, they were ideally suited to the demands of clandestine operations along the dangerous Breton-Norman coast, since they were far less vulnerable than conventional auxiliary craft to the risk of being becalmed or running aground.¹⁷⁰⁷ Similarly, Gordon argued that the vessels could be 'armed and provided by the inhabitants of this Island on much easier terms than [vessels] in England',¹⁷⁰⁸ thus helping to lessen the expence incurred to the British government.

Intelligence-Gathering as an Aspect of Everyday Duties

As highlighted by Cobban, the pre-war years had been characterised by a belief amongst ministers that Britain would be able to remain aloof from events on the Continent, and little, therefore, had been done to improve either military or naval intelligence-gathering.¹⁷⁰⁹ Consequently, complaints were voiced during the early months of the war – both in the Channel Islands and in London¹⁷¹⁰ – concerning the lack of information relating to the situation on the Continent, with the Jersey Chamber of Commerce fearing that the outbreak of war would catch

¹⁷⁰⁶ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates from 1803 to the Present Time*, Vol XV (1812) pp. 205-206

¹⁷⁰⁷ BL, Add MS 37866, D'Auvergne to Windham, December 1st 1799

¹⁷⁰⁸ TNA, HO 98/9, Gordon to Pelham, March 20th 1803

¹⁷⁰⁹ Cobban, 'Channel Islands' Correspondence' 38

¹⁷¹⁰ TNA, HO 98/3, Napean to Falle, March 13th 1793; and HO 98/41, Le Mesurier to Nepean, February 19th 1793 and Le Mesurier to Dundas, March 17th 1793

the Islands off guard.¹⁷¹¹ Such was indeed the case: while a considerable investment had been expended on intelligence-gathering during the 1780s, the peacetime reliance on diplomats and meant that the declaration of war found the British at a disadvantage (see above).¹⁷¹² As late as 1811 – and in spite of various attempts to improve the situation – Don declared his frustration at the sporadic nature of detailed intelligence from the French coast, and the frequency with which ‘Acts of God’ thwarted his scouts.¹⁷¹³ Moreover, while the ability of D’Auvergne and his agents to source detailed intelligence was demonstrated consistently,¹⁷¹⁴ the former was entrusted with several other crucial duties, including management of both the *Comité de Secours* (see chapter five) and *La Correspondence* (see chapter nine).

While it will be demonstrated that the Channel Islands played a prominent role in the collection of intelligence through clandestine and covert means, it must be remembered that a good deal of useful information was obtained during the course of ‘ordinary’ naval operations. Valuable through the services of ‘confidential agents’ may have been (see chapter nine), they by no means possessed a monopoly over intelligence-gathering; rather, the task was incorporated into virtually every aspect of naval life involving contact – direct or indirect – with the enemy.¹⁷¹⁵ The value placed in such ‘passive’ intelligence-gathering by the British government is evident from the orders given to

¹⁷¹¹ SJA, L/A/38/A1/2, Entries for February 9th 1793

¹⁷¹² Morieux, *The Channel*, pp. 312-314

¹⁷¹³ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, Don to ‘Gentlemen Unknown’, November 10th 1807; and L/F/95/B/9, Don to ‘My Dear Sir’, October 27th 1811

¹⁷¹⁴ TNA, ADM 1/6033, ‘Extract of a Letter from the Prince of Bouillon’, April 22nd 1796 and ‘Extract of Information Transmitted by the Prince of Buillon’, August 17th 1796; ADM 1/6035, ‘Extract of a Letter from the Prince of Bouillon’, December 7th 1801 and ‘Extract of a Letter from the Prince of Bouillon’, March 16th 1803; ADM 1/924, ‘Intelligence Received from *HMS Brilliant*’, August 31st 1808; and ADM 1/926, D’Auvergne to the Admiralty, March 5th 1811

¹⁷¹⁵ Spencer to Strachan, July 7th 1796, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. I, pp. 270-271

D'Auvergne and Saumarez on their being posted to the bailiwicks, since both men were instructed to take every opportunity to acquire new information regarding the enemy. Alongside the task of making contact with insurgent groups in the western provinces of France, the former was ordered to make use of this communication as a means by which to 'obtain early information of hostile movements of the enemy'.¹⁷¹⁶ Likewise, although the main justification for Saumarez' being posted to Guernsey Roads was that of ensuring the safety of the Channel Islands and the security of their mercantile fleet, it was made clear that he should 'endeavour to obtain such information of the enemy's forces, as circumstances will admit'.¹⁷¹⁷

Consequently, although much extant scholarship has analysed the Channel Islands' intelligence role from the perspective of covert operations, it is also important to give due consideration to the fact that the Islands were ideally situated to facilitate 'opportunistic' reconnaissance. To a certain extent, it is possible to understand why this aspect of local intelligence gathering has been neglected, since naval activity around the Channel Islands was hampered by treacherous weather and sea conditions, as well as by the lack of a fortified deep-water harbour. Yet in spite of such limitations, ample evidence exists of the vessels of both Saumarez' and D'Auvergne's squadrons – particularly those classed as auxiliaries or scouts – having engaged in surveillance in the course of their 'regular' duties. For example, following his capture of the French frigate *Réunion* (see chapter seven), Saumarez took the opportunity to reconnoitre the

¹⁷¹⁶ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, p. 57

¹⁷¹⁷ 'Orders received by Saumarez from the Admiralty, October 18th 1793', reproduced in Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, vol. I, p. 100

port of St. Malo,¹⁷¹⁸ and while providing an escort for a convoy of troop transports destined for Jersey, found himself able to observe enemy preparations at Granville.¹⁷¹⁹ Similarly, although they were engaged primarily for local patrol duty,¹⁷²⁰ D'Auvergne often used his hired vessels to obtain reports concerning developments at St. Malo, Solidor, Cancale, Granville, St. Germain, Portbail, Carteret, Vilette and Cherbourg.¹⁷²¹

Perhaps one of the best examples of 'passive' reconnaissance having been used effectively in combination with 'clandestine' intelligence is provided by the reports which were received in the Channel Islands at the time of the planned invasion of 1794 (see chapter three). According to information communicated by Captain Paterson, who had been engaged in a cruise off Le Havre, the frigate *La Seine* (42 guns) was already prepared for sea, and was expected to be soon joined by two new 36-gun frigates, three armed brigs, a cutter, a lugger and between twelve and fifteen gunboats. In addition, he estimated that as many as fifty merchantmen recently arrived from the West Indies had been converted to transports, and that some 10,000 men were to be embarked for Great Britain, Jersey, Guernsey or Ostend, although 'the people seemed to disagree as to the precise object'. Finally, in giving specific details with respect to the gunboats, Patterson observed that each of these vessels carried 'four heavy pieces of ordnance', and also made reference to 'an extraordinary ketch of sixteen or eighteen guns', constructed in such a fashion so as to allow two mortars to be mounted amidships.¹⁷²²

¹⁷¹⁸ Despatch to the Admiralty, October 22nd 1793, reproduced in Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, Vol. I p. 109

¹⁷¹⁹ Ibid, p. 119

¹⁷²⁰ Presumably his three hired vessels; *Daphne*, *Aristocrat*, and *Royalist*.

¹⁷²¹ SJA, L/F/95/B/9, Don to 'My Dear Sir', October 27th 1811

¹⁷²² TNA, ADM 1/6032, Intelligence Received on March 24th 1794

In order to assess the accuracy of this intelligence, it will be necessary to compare it to information received from other sources, however, the reliability of the abovementioned information may also be demonstrated by comparing Paterson's reports to the details available in surviving French sources. As was mentioned in the earlier discussion of the attempted invasion of the Channel Islands (see chapter three), Rossignol's secret correspondence includes a list of those vessels which had been assembled at Le Havre, Cherbourg and Nantes by February 17th 1794. Although there are some minor inconsistencies in terms of armament, such variances were only to be expected, and are not so significant as to indicate that Paterson was mistaken in his observations of the scale of French preparations. For example, the list received by Rossignol indicates that six gunboats – each mounting either three or five 24-pdr guns – were already assembled at Le Havre a month before Paterson made his observations, and also mentions the presence of a 'bomb-vessel' named *Salamandre*. Moreover, it is reasonable to suggest that the latter was the 'extraordinary ketch' mentioned by Paterson, since although she appears in Rossignol's correspondence as mounting only six 6-pdr guns, she is described as mounting two 12-pdr mortars amidships.¹⁷²³

As to the extent to which the details supplied by D'Auvergne's contact were confirmed by evidence gathered from other sources, it is important to note that Jersey's *Greffier* had caused an official warning to be printed in *The Times* at least two days before Paterson's observations were received. According to this letter, 'an express addressed to one of the first houses in the City' had indicated that a French invasion of Great Britain was to be preceded by an assault on the

¹⁷²³ SJA, L/F/08/H/9, 'List of Gunboats', February 17th 1794

Channel Islands, and that an army of 10,000 men was being assembled at St. Malo for the purpose.¹⁷²⁴ Likewise, Paterson's report can also be seen to have been in accordance with information provided by a prisoner-of-war named John Whittmore, who had been incarcerated at both Dunkirk and Calais, had visited Paris, and had afterwards escaped to Jersey from Le Havre. Although the information which he provided with respect to the armament of the vessels assembled at that port was at considerable variance with that given by Patterson and included in Rossignol's correspondence, the general picture is similar. He described having seen two new frigates ready for sea, two frigates and two gunboats on the stocks, twenty gunboats, two brigs, eighty transports, and – once again – the presence of a vessel 'fitted with mortars, her foremasts made to lower when in action'.¹⁷²⁵

Human Intelligence – Captured Vessels and Prisoners of War

Aside from information obtained by naval officers acting 'in the line of duty', the Channel Islands also provided a conduit for information obtained through the capture of vessels and prisoners; in the majority of cases, a process which was linked to the 'power projection' form of intelligence-gathering. While the local hired vessels were highly active in this regard – the armed cutter *Duke of York* being deployed to seize coastal traders and recapture any British vessels which had fallen into French hands¹⁷²⁶ – it was also an aspect of intelligence-gathering in which privateers were able to flourish. In essence, the concept of 'human intelligence' was grounded upon the principle that useful information could be obtained through the questioning of prisoners-of-war and the inspection of

¹⁷²⁴ SJA, L/F/97/M2/39, De Carteret, *Greffier*, to *The Times*, March 15th 1794

¹⁷²⁵ TNA, WO 1/391, 'Report Submitted by Jacob Whittmore', February 2nd 1794

¹⁷²⁶ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of March 20th 1807

captured or ransomed ships.¹⁷²⁷ Consequently, although the culture of 'interrogation' during the Great French War was drastically different to that which surrounds the practice in the modern era, it was still desirable to take enemy combatants alive. As has been already demonstrated, multiple sources of intelligence were often in conflict, and the testimony of a single prisoner – even one who was not classed as an 'enemy'¹⁷²⁸ – might prove decisive in determining the course of action taken by a commander in the field.

While the British government was quick to recognise the utility of the Channel Islands as a centre for the interrogation of hostages and prisoners, it must be remembered that this aspect of intelligence-gathering was, and is, an inexact science. Although often leading to the securing of detailed information concerning both enemy preparations¹⁷²⁹ and the general state of affairs on the Continent,¹⁷³⁰ the securing of prisoners might be achieved only at the cost of a disproportionate investment of time and resources. For example, while the successes enjoyed by the Jersey-based *Aristocrat* in early 1800 resulted in the capture of a large number of sailors and civilians, one of the enemy vessels had surrendered only after a chase lasting more than five hours.¹⁷³¹ Moreover, there was no guarantee that prisoners would be secured: although succeeding in recapturing a Portuguese brig from her French prize crew, the captain of the *Railleur* (sloop, 14 guns) reported that only one enemy sailor had been captured, the rest escaping in a rowboat.¹⁷³² Similarly, while it was an 'open secret' that neutral vessels were widely employed in the carrying of contraband

¹⁷²⁷ Crowhurst, 'Experience, Skill and Luck', pp. 157-158

¹⁷²⁸ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to Sir Thomas Saumarez, December 28th 1799

¹⁷²⁹ TNA, HO 69/11/39, Gordon to D'Auvergne, November 12th 1796; and PC 1/118B, Bridport to D'Auvergne, August 13th 1798

¹⁷³⁰ TNA, ADM 1/6032, 'Copy of a Letter from Sir J. B. Warren', July 29th 1794

¹⁷³¹ TNA, FO 95/612/27, Lieutenant Wray to D'Auvergne, January 8th 1800; and FO 95/612/29, Lieutenant D'Auvergne to Philippe D'Auvergne, February 20th 1800

¹⁷³² TNA, PC 1/118B, Raynor to D'Auvergne, December 18th 1798

and secret correspondence, such items were usually the first to be thrown overboard or destroyed in the event of a crew being compelled to surrender.¹⁷³³

In light of such factors, it is understandable that the Admiralty should have preferred officers to concern themselves with the task of 'dealing with the enemy in home waters' rather than opportunistic prize-taking,¹⁷³⁴ yet on rare occasions when the latter resulted in an intelligence coup. The capture of *Le Club de Cherbourg* (cutter, 10 guns) provides a valuable example, since Saumarez' interrogation of her crew revealed not only that the French were assembling a force of eighteen sail-of-the-line at Brest, but also that these vessels were fitting out in preparation for making a rendezvous with an additional force at Quiberon Bay.¹⁷³⁵ That such information was both valuable and accurate was confirmed soon after Howe's departure with the Channel Fleet; having fallen in with an American vessel out of L'Orient, he was informed by her captain that the latter had passed in sight of a French fleet of seventeen sail-of-the-line. Furthermore, it is evident that the capture of *Le Club de Cherbourg* led to the thwarting of a potentially significant French expedition: having been discovered by Howe's frigates, Admiral de Galles retreated to Belle Isle, where his forces succumbed to 'a spirit of mutiny'.¹⁷³⁶

As for the risk that intelligence-gathering was at all times susceptible to corruption and fabrication, this was counterbalanced by the fact that a truthful picture of the enemy's intention could be obtained only through the combination

¹⁷³³ Bromley, 'A New Vocation', p. 110; and Daly, 'City of Smugglers', pp. 333-352

¹⁷³⁴ Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, p. 189

¹⁷³⁵ 'Letter from James Saumarez to Richard Saumarez, June 26th 1793', reproduced in Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, p. 94

¹⁷³⁶ W. James and F. Chamier, *The Naval History of Great Britain, from the Declaration of War by France in 1793 to the Accession of George IV*, 6 Vols., (London, 1826) Vol. I, pp. 64-65

of military and civilian sources.¹⁷³⁷ Consequently, on those occasions when prisoners *were* secured for interrogation, the Channel Islands offered the British government a significant advantage in relation both to the obtaining and analysis of information. While it could not be assumed that captives would answer truthfully to the questions put to them, it must be highlighted that *Jérriais* and *Guernésiais* were closely related to the Norman *patois*, and that the majority of Islanders spoke French rather than English.¹⁷³⁸ In addition, a significant proportion of enemy prisoners landed in the Channel Islands shared the local inhabitants' hostility towards the Republic: not only did they carry on commercial business with the Channel Islanders during peacetime,¹⁷³⁹ but they also regarded themselves as being 'Breton' or 'Norman', not 'French'.¹⁷⁴⁰ As a result, just as D'Auvergne's fluency in French and familiarity with Breton and Norman customs influenced his appointment as co-ordinator of the *Comité de Secours* (see chapter five),¹⁷⁴¹ so they made him ideal for overseeing the interrogation of prisoners originating from those provinces.¹⁷⁴²

In addition to this advantage in securing intelligence, the Channel Islands also served the important function of providing a secure 'relay station' for prisoners-of-war destined for further questioning in Britain. Although Saumarez' records contain a number of good examples, perhaps the most notable is the capture of the French frigate *Réunion*, an action which resulted in the capture of around 160 prisoners, all of whom were brought into Guernsey.¹⁷⁴³ While this remained the greatest single success for Saumarez' squadron in terms of the number of

¹⁷³⁷ Davies, 'British Intelligence', pp. 17 and 115

¹⁷³⁸ Crossan, 'Guernsey 1814-1914', pp. 215 and 219

¹⁷³⁹ Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and Smuggling', p. 208

¹⁷⁴⁰ Morieux, 'Diplomacy from Below', 118

¹⁷⁴¹ Ashelford, *In the English Service*, p. 81

¹⁷⁴² SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to Lieutenant Donovan, *HMS Minerva*, November 21st 1799

¹⁷⁴³ Despatches to the Admiralty, October 20th and 22nd 1793, reproduced in Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, Vol. I, pp. 104-105 and 109

prisoners taken in a single action, both he and his subordinates continued to bring in large numbers of prisoners throughout the War. In 1804, for example, they accounted for the capture of the *Brave* (16 guns, 100 men), the *Jeune Henri* (12 guns and 64 men), four gunboats and a Cherbourg privateer, as well as the destruction of an unknown number of gunboats.¹⁷⁴⁴ In addition to the successes enjoyed by ships-of-war, the Islands' privateers also brought in their own share of prisoners, although the nature of prey (see chapter seven) meant that the number of captives rarely rose into double figures.¹⁷⁴⁵ Furthermore, it was often the case that the interrogation of prisoners taken by the local privateers ended with their release and repatriation,¹⁷⁴⁶ since fishermen and members of other 'protected' groups could be detained only if explicitly evidence was found to link them to smuggling or espionage.¹⁷⁴⁷

However, the employment of the Channel Islands as a 'holding centre' for enemy prisoners highlights an aspect of 'human intelligence' which, though already alluded to, has not yet been examined in detail; the extent to which information might be obtained from one's own prisoners-of-war. As long as the Channel Islands remained in British hands, they represented a vital refuge for those soldiers and seamen who were fortunate enough to find the means to affect their escape from Brittany or Normandy (see above).¹⁷⁴⁸ Indeed, while the work of *La Correspondence* after 1794 was mainly concerned with the smuggling of arms and other supplies to the royalist insurgents (see chapter

¹⁷⁴⁴ Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, Vol. II, p. 86

¹⁷⁴⁵ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to Lieutenant Norris, March 7th 1800

¹⁷⁴⁶ Ibid, Le Couteur to D'Auvergne, August 19th 1801

¹⁷⁴⁷ NMM, MSS/84/014/1, 'Orders from the Lord High Admiral', June 12th 1803

¹⁷⁴⁸ TNA, WO 1/603, 'Deposition of James Longhurst, Late Prize-Master of the Lugger *Brilliant* of Guernsey', March 7th 1795; 'Deposition of Edmund Dowar', undated, 1795; 'Deposition of Captain Benest of the *Alligator*', April 8th 1795; and WO 1/605, 'Deposition of William Chigwin and Paul Bienvenue, late Master and Mate of a Jersey Sloop', March 30th 1795

nine),¹⁷⁴⁹ the network also served to facilitate the rescue of British prisoners-of-war and their repatriation via Jersey. In the majority of cases, such assistance is likely to have been limited to the provision of sanctuary and the loan of a small boat,¹⁷⁵⁰ but several reports exist of the *chouans* having actively participated in the rescue of British prisoners-of-war, breaking them out of prison or ambushing convoys or marching columns.¹⁷⁵¹ Moreover, such assistance appears to have been willingly given: for example, three Jersey men – crewmen from the Newfoundland convoy intercepted in June 1794 (see chapter five) – spent nine months among the *chouans* following their escape from Dinan Castle, being ‘clothed and treated with much attention’.¹⁷⁵²

While it is true that the length of time required for a prisoner-of-war to get away safely to the Channel Islands might prevent much of their intelligence from being employed in any specific manner, it is clear that they nonetheless provided a valuable source of information. In late January 1795, for example, several prisoners were successfully conveyed to Jersey by the *chouans* commanded by Boishardy, among them a Captain Norris, who had been some months a prisoner in the hulks at Brest. Not only did this officer bring intelligence that the fleet which had sailed from thence on Christmas Day consisted of thirty-five sail-of-the-line and twelve frigates, but he observed that their ‘manner of working’ indicated their being ‘badly manned’. In addition, he reported that both the *Revolutionnaire* (*Premier Rang*, 110 guns) and an unnamed 80-gun vessel had, in attempting to get under sail, been driven upon

¹⁷⁴⁹ King, ‘The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists’, Abstract

¹⁷⁵⁰ TNA, WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, January 28th 1795; FO 95/605/8, D’Auvergne to Windham, March 13th 1795; and BL, Add MS 37865, D’Auvergne to Anon, October 1st 1798

¹⁷⁵¹ TNA, FO 95/606, D’Auvergne to Woodford, November 5th 1795

¹⁷⁵² FO 95/605/8, D’Auvergne to Windham, March 13th 1795

some rocks 'with the loss of a major part of their crews'.¹⁷⁵³ Finally, repatriated prisoners-of-war proved to be a source of much-needed reports on the general situation on the Continent; both with respect to the economic situation of the country¹⁷⁵⁴ and the disposition of the people towards the government and its approach to the War.¹⁷⁵⁵

The Channel Islands as a Base for Clandestine Operations

Turning to the question of the bailiwicks' value as a base for espionage activities, it is here that it is possible to address more closely the deficiencies in the British intelligence machine and the operation of the 'secret service'. In effect, it is the intent of the remainder of this chapter to prove that the possession of the Islands by the British crown enabled the authorities – both locally and at Westminster – to compensate for the many deficiencies which were identified above. As with the Islands' engagement with the support of reconnaissance carried out by the Royal Navy and hired vessels, local geography was a significant factor in terms of facilitating the clandestine activities carried on from the bailiwicks. For example, the Chausey Isles provided a useful staging-point from which confidential agents might be landed on the French coast,¹⁷⁵⁶ as did Sark and the Paternoster Reef, from whence two French spies escaped the Islands in 1808.¹⁷⁵⁷ However, while D'Auvergne was able to establish a widespread network of agents, guides, pilots and

¹⁷⁵³ WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, January 28th 1795

¹⁷⁵⁴ TNA, WO 1/603, 'Deposition of Captain Benest of the *Alligator*', April 8th 1795

¹⁷⁵⁵ TNA, WO 1/605, 'Deposition of William Chigwin and Paul Bienvenue, Late Master and Mate of a Jersey Sloop', March 30th 1795; and FO 95/605/103, D'Auvergne to Windham, September 25th 1798

¹⁷⁵⁶ SJA, A/A1/4, Letter of October 21st 1811

¹⁷⁵⁷ SJA, A/A1/1, Letter of August 25th 1808

boatmen,¹⁷⁵⁸ all supported by a number of safe-houses,¹⁷⁵⁹ he was forced to overcome a number of obstacles. Not only did the attention of the *garde-côtes* and the *gendarmes* often force operations to be abandoned,¹⁷⁶⁰ but contrary winds and tides also caused problems, and it was by no means unusual for the landing of an agent to be delayed by several days as a result.¹⁷⁶¹

Even if the operations of *La Correspondence* were often disrupted through a combination of enemy vigilance and 'Acts of God', one of its strengths was its ability to draw upon the vast wellspring of manpower offered by the large number of *émigrés* resident in the Islands (see chapter five). While a few prominent figures – de Pointbriand, de Couesbouc and du Boishamon – returned to France in order to take up leading roles amongst the *chouans* or royalists (see chapter nine)¹⁷⁶² – D'Auvergne's network continued to draw in a number of highly experienced personnel. For example, 'De Veaucouleur' is recorded as having served as a lieutenant in the French Navy, while 'Sauson' had served for many years in the *Commissariat* at Brest, and 'Pallierne' was awarded ultimately with a Colonelcy in the British Army.¹⁷⁶³ Indeed, the attitude of the *émigrés* serving with *La Correspondence* stands in stark contrast with those men who enlisted in the various *émigré* regiments formed in preparation for the Quiberon Expedition.¹⁷⁶⁴ According to Nicholas, the *émigrés* who volunteered for service in these corps 'all wanted to be officers, and none

¹⁷⁵⁸ SJA, A/A2/1, List of Agents, undated

¹⁷⁵⁹ Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent', 328; and Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I. p. 94

¹⁷⁶⁰ SJA, L/F/95/B/31, 'Letter from Don to Doyle Concerning an Attempt by Captain White to Communicate to the Opposite Coast', July 31st 1813; and Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent', 324

¹⁷⁶¹ SJA, L/F/08/A/19, 'Letter from Balcarres, to Moira Informing Him of the Bad Weather which was Hampering Sailing to France, and of Firing Heard from Dol', December 13th 1793

¹⁷⁶² Sutherland, *The Chouans*, p. 282

¹⁷⁶³ SJA, A/A2/1, List of Agents, undated

¹⁷⁶⁴ TNA, HO 69/15, 'Muster Rolls for French Émigré Regiments', December 24th 1795 (Mortemart) and April 29th 1796 (Castries)

contemplated being a serving soldier',¹⁷⁶⁵ while Balleine has argued that their being mustered for drill was little more than an administrative exercise to prevent corruption.¹⁷⁶⁶

As ineffectual as the *émigré* regiments may have been, it is evident that those who volunteered to serve in *La Correspondence* were dedicated to assisting the British in gathering intelligence. Referring to 'Hue', chief guide for the Breton sector, D'Auvergne recorded that this agent had 'served with great fidelity from the beginning of the War' and rewarded him with a monthly pension of 111 *Livres*. Likewise, three of the Breton guides over whom 'Hue' exercised command were listed as having been invalided in the course of their duties, with a fourth, identified as 'Macé', had been killed soon after offering his home as a safe-house for *La Correspondence*.¹⁷⁶⁷ Moreover, Balleine states that the Police Register of *La Manche* listed 160 boatmen 'presumed to be in English pay', 108 persons 'devoted to the Prince of Bouillon', and 132 others as suspected of being in touch with him.¹⁷⁶⁸ However, the advantage gained by the British as a result of being able to operate *émigré* agents out of Jersey lay not only in the efficiency with which information might be relayed to Whitehall,¹⁷⁶⁹ but in D'Auvergne's ability to conduct preliminary analysis of the reports which he received.¹⁷⁷⁰ As highlighted by Davies, the sheer volume of information acquired might just as easily exacerbate as reduce the confusion experienced

¹⁷⁶⁵ Nicholas, *George Don*, p. 3

¹⁷⁶⁶ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, p. 62

¹⁷⁶⁷ SJA, A/A2/1, List of Agents, undated

¹⁷⁶⁸ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, p. 112

¹⁷⁶⁹ Spencer to Strachan, July 7th 1796, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. I, pp. 270-271

¹⁷⁷⁰ Ashelford, *In the English Service*, p. 84

by commanders with respect to the enemy's intentions, and it was vital that analysis was carried out at all levels.¹⁷⁷¹

Stabilising the Intelligence Network

As has already been mentioned, Britain's intelligence services during the 1790s often suffered from poor co-ordination between government departments¹⁷⁷² and – as shown by the rivalry which sprang up between Falle and D'Auvergne – jealousy and competition between personnel.¹⁷⁷³ However, the latter half of the Great French War saw considerable improvement to the situation: not only did D'Auvergne and Don form a highly effective working relationship, but the 'voluminous intelligence reports' which they supplied could be compared against those generated by a number of other networks.¹⁷⁷⁴ Moreover, while it was often the case that the speed of transmission might lead to information being 'out-of-date' by the time that it was relayed back to Whitehall,¹⁷⁷⁵ it must be remembered that intelligence operations out of the Channel Islands required far more detailed planning and organisation. Indeed, while ministers complained of occasional errors with respect to the information being forwarded by D'Auvergne's agents,¹⁷⁷⁶ the fact that their efforts were focused on a comparatively small area meant that such mistakes were atypical. In addition, Don was able to engage in close co-operation with both Doyle in Guernsey and Menzies in Alderney,¹⁷⁷⁷ maintaining a detailed correspondence which enabled

¹⁷⁷¹ Davies, 'British Intelligence', p. 17

¹⁷⁷² Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 126

¹⁷⁷³ TNA, WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, October 31st 1794; and FO 95/604/1, D'Auvergne to Dundas, November 4th 1794

¹⁷⁷⁴ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, pp. 289-290

¹⁷⁷⁵ Davies, 'British Intelligence', p. 70

¹⁷⁷⁶ Hall, *British Strategy*, p. 47

¹⁷⁷⁷ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of August 11th 1806

a more prompt review of intelligence and a collaborative assessment of matters pertaining to internal and external security.¹⁷⁷⁸

Although the historiography of D'Auvergne's mission to the Channel Islands may sometimes appear to drift rather too close to the 'hero-worship' which formerly characterised studies of Nelson,¹⁷⁷⁹ it is important not to underestimate the impact which he had on local intelligence operations. As can be seen from the evidence presented in this chapter, his organisational abilities served to increase the volume of intelligence received concerning the situation in the Western Provinces, while his familiarity with the region provided an additional level of insight with respect to the analysis of reports. Even before the outbreak of war, D'Auvergne had seized on several opportunities to build up contacts on the Continent, convalescing in the Channel Departments in 1784, visiting St. Malo, Le Havre and Cherbourg in 1787 and 1788, and making a second tour of the maritime provinces in 1792.¹⁷⁸⁰ In addition, while Balleine may be correct in his assertion that Falle resented his cousin's independence from local military authority (see above), it is clear that D'Auvergne had every intention of co-operating with his colleagues, regardless of where his ultimate responsibility lay. We have already seen, for example, that he was one of the primary advocates of the initial creation of the Islands' telegraphic communications (see chapter seven), the reactivation of that system in 1804,¹⁷⁸¹ and the various improvements made during Don's tenure.¹⁷⁸²

¹⁷⁷⁸ *SJA*, L/F/95/A/22, Don to Doyle, October 2nd 1807; and A/A1/1, Letter of August 25th 1808

¹⁷⁷⁹ Jamieson, 'The Channel Islands and British Maritime Strategy', p. 224

¹⁷⁸⁰ See Cobban, 'The British Secret Service in France', 249-250

¹⁷⁸¹ *SJL*, LSF J385.5 Bib. Ref: 326759, Entries for May 16th 1803 and June 11th 1803

¹⁷⁸² *SJA*, A/A5/2, Letter of May 3rd 1809

The importance of the Islands' commanders' efforts to co-ordinate their intelligence operations was most clearly demonstrated during periods of heightened invasion threat. As was highlighted by Don in a letter of 1807, considerable ignorance prevailed concerning the value of the Channel Islands: referring to remarks which had been reportedly made by General Robertson to the Duke of York, the Lieutenant-Governor declared them 'erroneous in every essential point'.¹⁷⁸³ Indeed, it is clear that Don and his colleagues were able to keep the British government and the Admiralty well-informed on the subject of enemy preparations; reports sent in by D'Auvergne in 1796 being used to verify information received from Warren concerning preparations undertaken in St. Malo, Rochefort and Bordeaux.¹⁷⁸⁴ Similarly, April 1797 saw reports arrive at the Admiralty from Gordon's agents, the contents of which warned that 'dispositions were being made for the Dunkirk Flotilla all along the coast, from Cherbourg down through Ainse, St. Malo and Granville'.¹⁷⁸⁵ Finally, both August 1810 and September 1811 saw Don enter into detailed correspondence with the Home Office, detailed plans being drawn up for the reinforcement of the Channel Islands in consequence of intelligence concerning enemy maritime preparations which, it was feared, would be directed thence.¹⁷⁸⁶

However, while it may be true that the various spies and agents operating out of the Channel Islands were able to provide the British with a reasonably steady stream of intelligence, the reality was that the frequency and quality of reports was often poor. As was highlighted during the analysis of the Channel Islands' signal system, its expansion during Don's tenure as Lieutenant-Governor of

¹⁷⁸³ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, Don to 'Gentlemen Unknown', November 10th 1807

¹⁷⁸⁴ Spencer to Strachan, July 7th 1796 and Warren to Spencer, August 7th 1796, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. I, pp. 270-274

¹⁷⁸⁵ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, Gordon to Townshend re. Intelligence Received at Jersey, April 21st 1797

¹⁷⁸⁶ SJA, A/A1/3, Letter of August 25th 1810; and A/A1/4, Letter of September 20th 1811

Jersey was prompted by the fact that he was left for several weeks without detailed updates from his contacts on the French coast. For example, no intelligence appears to have reached the Island from that quarter during the whole of January 1807,¹⁷⁸⁷ November 1807,¹⁷⁸⁸ or August 1812,¹⁷⁸⁹ and the second of these incidences provided the impetus for accelerating completion of the construction of the Sark relay station. Even so, it was sometimes the case that the delays experienced by individual agents were actually beneficial to the British government; in November 1807, for example, one of Don's agents was forced to anchor in the Isles de Chaussée, and he took the opportunity to undertake additional surveillance. In addition to observing preparations at Granville, St. Malo, St. Coulomb and St. Brieuc, the agent's reports confirmed Napoleon's intentions to abandon the Italian Campaign in favour of a focus on the Channel and Portugal.¹⁷⁹⁰

The Reliability of *La Correspondence*

In closing this examination of the role of the Channel Islands as an aspect of the British government's intelligence machine, it is necessary to engage in a specific discussion of the difficulties experienced by D'Auvergne in terms of ensuring the accuracy of the reports submitted by his agents. Crowhurst's assessment is sceptical at best: he argued that for many agents, 'it was easier [for them] to write a general report that would supply information of a sort and maintain the supply of funds than risk arrest as a spy by seeking detailed

¹⁷⁸⁷ SJA, A/A1/2, Letter of January 29th 1807

¹⁷⁸⁸ SJA, L/F/95/A/24, Don to Doyle, November 15th 1807

¹⁷⁸⁹ SJA, L/F/95/B/1, Don to Doyle, July 25th 1810

¹⁷⁹⁰ SJA, L/F/95/A/25, Don to Doyle, November 27th 1807

news'.¹⁷⁹¹ However, while it is certainly true that false or inaccurate reports were by no means rare, it must be remembered that the French authorities were engaged in an active campaign of misinformation; one which facilitated the respective escapes of both Bruix and Gantheaume in 1799 and 1801 (see chapter seven).¹⁷⁹² Indeed, although *La Correspondence* had provided the British with accurate intelligence concerning Hoche's Expedition to Ireland (see below), D'Auvergne's agent at Brest was, in 1799, wholly deceived by a false trail, leading – unsurprisingly – to his being quickly replaced by 'a new and intelligent person'.¹⁷⁹³ Ultimately, even if the frequency of 'uncertain and contradictory reports'¹⁷⁹⁴ meant that D'Auvergne was obliged to expend a great deal of effort in ensuring that only intelligence which could 'absolutely be relied upon' was forwarded to London,¹⁷⁹⁵ successful and trusted agents continued to receive significant financial compensation.¹⁷⁹⁶

Although British intelligence operations may have been disrupted by a lack of co-operation,¹⁷⁹⁷ and while foreign networks such as that run by the Queen of Sicily were plagued by mediocrity,¹⁷⁹⁸ the image which survives of *La Correspondence* is reasonably positive. As has already been highlighted, the infrequent nature of intelligence reports may have been a source of frustration, providing impetus for the expansion and modernisation of the Islands' telegraphic signal system, but blame was only rarely laid at the feet of the

¹⁷⁹¹ Crowhurst, *The French War on Trade*, p. 31

¹⁷⁹² Duffy, 'British Intelligence', 601-618

¹⁷⁹³ TNA, FO 95/612/24, D'Auvergne to Nepean, November 29th 1799

¹⁷⁹⁴ TNA, PC 1/117B, D'Auvergne to Dundas, August 31st 1795; and WO 1/923/99, D'Auvergne to Hutchkisson, February 22nd 1800

¹⁷⁹⁵ TNA, FO 95/605/112, D'Auvergne to Huskisson, May 6th, 1799; WO 1/605, Doyle to Hobart, September 20th 1803; HO 98/27, Doyle to Hawkesbury, 'Confidential', February 5th 1808; and HO 98/31, Doyle to Hawkesbury, 'Confidential', February 5th 1808

¹⁷⁹⁶ Ashelford, *In the English Service*, p. 84

¹⁷⁹⁷ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 128

¹⁷⁹⁸ Gregory, *Sicily*, p. 44

agents themselves.¹⁷⁹⁹ Rather than accuse his subordinates of incompetence – an implication made by officers such as St. Vincent – D’Auvergne’s personal remarks concerning his agents may be reasonably comparable to comments made by Wellington with respect to Colquhoun Grant. Just as ‘Cock’s’ death at Burgos (1812) was lamented by Wellington as a serious blow to his intelligence network in the Peninsula, so D’Auvergne can be seen to have been sorely affected by the capture and execution of De Veaucouleur. So highly rated was this particular agent – particularly with respect to the conveyance of information to and from the *chouans* – that D’Auvergne gave orders that his widow was to ‘receive his pay for a twelve month after his death, as is the usage in our Navy to persons losing their lives on service’.¹⁸⁰⁰

Not only is it clear that D’Auvergne placed a great deal of faith in those who served under him, but there is ample evidence to suggest that this faith was generally well-placed. Turning once again to the planned Expedition to Ireland, it should be highlighted that ‘Pallierne’ succeeded in infiltrating the headquarters of both Bernadotte and Hoche, and sent back a number of detailed reports to Jersey before being finally forced to flee.¹⁸⁰¹ In addition, while the British government may have expressed caution concerning some of D’Auvergne’s reports – mainly due to the continual problem of contrary reports arriving from other sources¹⁸⁰² – such doubts did not necessarily result in the dismissal of the information received. This was demonstrated most clearly in 1797, when news reached Jersey from one of D’Auvergne’s agents concerning the assembly of a squadron of ten gunboats at Le Havre and Cherbourg, together with a flotilla of

¹⁷⁹⁹ SJA, L/F/95/A/6, ‘Observations Made from Sark’, August 14th 1806

¹⁸⁰⁰ SJA, A/A2/1, Entries for ‘Mauger’ and ‘De Veaucouleur’ in ‘List of Agents’

¹⁸⁰¹ Ibid, Entry for ‘Pallierne’ in ‘List of Agents’

¹⁸⁰² Duffy, ‘British Intelligence’, 601-618; and Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest*, pp. 415-416

transports at St. Malo. Gordon not only informed his superior that he believed it 'extremely probably that the intelligence is well-founded', but he also sent copies of the relevant reports to the Admiralty without awaiting further instruction, and ordered that supplies be sent out so as to enable seven hundred men of the active militia to be encamped.¹⁸⁰³

However, while the prevailing opinion of D'Auvergne's agents – both locally and at Whitehall – may have expressed confidence in the accuracy of his reports, the reality is that there were times when a number of individual naval officers looked upon his intelligence with considerable incredulity. Given that reports concerning the movement of the enemy were often in conflict,¹⁸⁰⁴ it is not surprising that such attitudes existed, but St. Vincent's letters reveal just how strong the scepticism could become. Writing to Spencer, the Admiral said of D'Auvergne's intelligence, 'it must be very defective indeed if the number of ships at Brest in readiness for sea is not ascertained daily',¹⁸⁰⁵ a view which he repeated in correspondence with Keats and Berkeley. Referring to reports received from D'Auvergne's agents at Brest, St. Vincent declared that 'what degree of credit is to be given to it I am not a competent judge',¹⁸⁰⁶ and even went so far as to claim that the information sent by D'Auvergne 'militates so strongly against our observations that...I think it must be erroneous'.¹⁸⁰⁷ With respect to such disagreements, it is necessary to bear in mind that a skilled commander, even when faced with contradictory intelligence from multiple

¹⁸⁰³ SJA, L/F/106/A/1, 'Gordon to Townshend re. Intelligence received at Jersey', April 21st, 1797

¹⁸⁰⁴ Morriss, *The Blockade of Brest*, p. 623

¹⁸⁰⁵ Ibid, St. Vincent to Spencer, May 5th, 1800, p. 464

¹⁸⁰⁶ Ibid, St. Vincent to Keats, May 5th 1800, p. 465

¹⁸⁰⁷ Ibid, St. Vincent to Berkeley, June 19th 1800, p. 512

trusted sources, 'was usually provided with sufficient information to react as if he had advanced warning of the enemy's intentions'.¹⁸⁰⁸

The Channel Islands Intelligence Network – An Asset or a Hindrance?

As Davies observed, successful intelligence gathering was dependent on four critical points: the correct intelligence had to be requested; collection could not be flawed or compromised; analysis had to be accurate; and dissemination could not be delayed'.¹⁸⁰⁹ In light of the evidence presented in this chapter, it is certainly possible to conclude that the Channel Islands performed a highly valuable role within Britain's intelligence network, contributing greatly to the latter category. In addition, while it is true that the reliability of the information provided by D'Auvergne's agents may have at times been called into question, the majority of their reports can be seen to have been of considerable assistance to a highly stretched Royal Navy (see chapter seven). Moreover, the other forms of intelligence-gathering facilitated through Great Britain's possession of the Channel Islands – specifically routine naval reconnaissance and 'human intelligence' – proved to be far more reliable than information generated through espionage. Consequently, these additional sources of intelligence may be regarded as having compensated for the shortcomings in the embryonic British secret service, especially in light of the efficiency of the communication between the Channel Islands and Great Britain.

Moreover, while D'Auvergne's agents may have maintained a generally accurate picture of French naval preparations – particularly with respect to multiplicity of small ports along the Breton-Norman coast – the same cannot be

¹⁸⁰⁸ Davies, 'British Intelligence', p. 178

¹⁸⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 27

said of the intelligence produced from his dealings with the royalists.¹⁸¹⁰ As has been highlighted, the British government was often frustrated by the mass of contradictory information sent over by the counter-Revolutionary leaders, while the 'General Gaston' affair typified those occasions when agents were obliged to invest time and manpower investigating leads which, though acknowledged as being almost entirely spurious, could not be dismissed. Consequently, in spite of the Channel Islands having proved a considerable asset to the British government within the context of intelligence-gathering, the potential for the royalists to be exploited in this context was never fully realised. Even when communication between Jersey and France became 'as regular and normal as the postal service in England'¹⁸¹¹ – the *émigrés* proving a source of 'zealous' volunteers¹⁸¹² – the gathering of intelligence from the royalists was deemed subordinate to their utility as fifth columnists and guerillas.¹⁸¹³

¹⁸¹⁰ TNA, HO 98/27, Doyle to Pelham, January 18th 1803

¹⁸¹¹ King, 'Jersey: Centre D'Espionnage', 434

¹⁸¹² TNA, WO 1/925/45, D'Auvergne to Windham, May 5th 1806

¹⁸¹³ King, 'The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists', Abstract

Chapter Nine – The Counter-Revolution: *La Vendée* and *Chouannerie*

Throughout the Great French War, the nature of the Channel Islands as an outpost on a key border territory rendered them highly vulnerable to invasion, especially following the comprehensive early successes of the Republican armies and the rapid restoration of the navy (see chapter three).¹⁸¹⁴ Even in the aftermath of Trafalgar, France's warships and *corsairs* continued to menace Britain's commercial traffic, the Royal Navy's blockade of the Channel ports being able to limit, not entirely prevent, the escape of small raiding squadrons (see chapter seven). Moreover, in a period of social upheaval and economic distress, typified by the emergence of radical and reformist political groups (see chapter five), it is unsurprising that the fear of spies,¹⁸¹⁵ fifth columnist activity and armed insurrection was almost as great as that of invasion itself.¹⁸¹⁶

Indeed, while dismissed by the British authorities as 'a mad enterprise' driven by 'idle talk and boasting', the Despard Plot (1802)¹⁸¹⁷ – like Hoche's Expedition to Ireland and the United Irishmen's Rebellion (1798) – reinforced fears that a foreign invasion might well be supported by a domestic uprising. In this context, covert operations conducted via the Channel Islands were highly attractive, since they not only represented an opportunity to target 'subversive doctrines' at source,¹⁸¹⁸ but also had the potential to seriously disrupt the enemy with only the minimum investment.¹⁸¹⁹

¹⁸¹⁴ Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict*, pp. 251-252

¹⁸¹⁵ TNA, FO 95/615, 'French Agents in Highgate and Hampstead are Suspected of Communicating Via a 'Secret Telegraph' of Signalling Mirrors', July 12th 1803

¹⁸¹⁶ Colley, *Britons*, pp. 325-326

¹⁸¹⁷ TNA, FO 95/615, Letters of July 23rd, September 21st and 26th 1802

¹⁸¹⁸ TNA, WO 1/923/75, 'D'Auvergne to Twiss and Taylor, Memoir Describing Recent *Chouannerie*', February 27th 1800

¹⁸¹⁹ TNA, WO 1/923/99, 'D'Auvergne to Huskisson, Brittany Negotiations, Parisian Versions Vis-à-Vis Those of Royalist Generals', February 4th 1800

In terms of the rationale behind the British government's decision to involve itself in the royalist insurgency, it must be emphasised that their relations with both the Bretons and Vendéens were at all times dictated by a careful blend of pragmatism and practicality. Although D'Auvergne's correspondence includes frequent references to his contacts as 'the true friends of the House of Bourbon',¹⁸²⁰ no commitment was made with respect to the restoration of the *Ancien Régime* as a condition of peace.¹⁸²¹ Moreover, as King observed, it was only at the time of Moira's Expedition – less than one year after the declaration of war – that the British government can be reasonably considered to have displayed any confidence in 'the strength and dependability of the royalist army' with respect to joint operations.¹⁸²² With the exception of the Quiberon Expedition – for which they were persuaded to offer logistical support and assist in the consolidation of a successful landing (see below) – this marked the greatest attempt by the British to provide aid to the royalists.¹⁸²³ Otherwise, the extent of the government's interest in the insurgency was limited to its potential for fifth columnist activity to destabilise the Western Provinces,¹⁸²⁴ chiefly by causing disruption to naval and military preparations in the Channel Ports¹⁸²⁵ and 'intercept and interrupt all unprotected communications'.¹⁸²⁶

However, in spite of the failure of both Moira's Expedition and the Quiberon Expedition, the lessons learned had a significant impact, both in terms of the British government's approach to the insurgency and the use of the Channel

¹⁸²⁰ TNA, FO 95/611, D'Auvergne to Windham, November 4th 1800; and FO 95/617, D'Auvergne to Hobart, July 24th 1803

¹⁸²¹ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, p. 64

¹⁸²² King, 'The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists', p. 353

¹⁸²³ M. Duffy, 'British Diplomacy and the French Wars, 1789-1815', in H.T. Dickinson, *Britain and the French Revolution, 1789-1815* (New York City, New York, 1989) p. 134

¹⁸²⁴ TNA, PC 1/117B, D'Auvergne to Dundas, December 19th 1795

¹⁸²⁵ TNA, FO 95/605/62, D'Auvergne to Windham, July 28th 1796

¹⁸²⁶ BL, Add MS 37866, Intelligence from D'Auvergne, November 26th 1799; and TNA, WO 1/923/99, D'Auvergne to Hutchkisson, February 4th 1800

Islands as a conduit for aid. Most importantly, despite the zeal with which Puisaye and others sought to mould their followers into a conventional army,¹⁸²⁷ the ease with which the *émigré* regiments had been crushed by the republicans proved that the royalists could be effective only if employed as irregular troops.¹⁸²⁸ The only exception to this rule concerned those *émigré* regiments which had been raised in the Channel Islands: these had taken no active part in the landing at Quiberon, and were thus allowed to remain in being as a garrison reserve until October 1796,¹⁸²⁹ when they were transferred to England.¹⁸³⁰ In addition, the failure of Moira's Expedition served to convince the British government of the royalist leaders' distorted view of the insurgency,¹⁸³¹ since it revealed an apparent expectation amongst the *émigrés* that D'Auvergne would possess a 'supernatural knowledge' of the situation.¹⁸³² Thereafter, all aid sent to the insurgents – whether destined for the Vendée or Brittany – was predicated upon the exploitation of the royalists' potential to act as a potent psychological weapon and a means of disrupting the social and political order of the western provinces.¹⁸³³

Indeed, while the counter-Revolution may have proved ultimately to be little more than a hindrance to the Republic, the response by the French authorities demonstrates the seriousness with which it was treated, and particularly as a potential threat to the stability of the Western Provinces. Throughout 1799, reports were received at Jersey concerning the mass arrest of suspected

¹⁸²⁷ King, 'The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists', pp. 317-322

¹⁸²⁸ Warren to Bridport, July 3rd 1795, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. II, pp. 80-81

¹⁸²⁹ TNA, HO 69/15, 'Muster Rolls for French Émigré Regiments', December 24th 1795 (Mortemart) and April 29th 1796 (Castries)

¹⁸³⁰ BL, Add MS 37862, D'Auvergne to Windham, October 20th 1796

¹⁸³¹ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I. p. 83

¹⁸³² King, 'The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists', p. 141

¹⁸³³ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I. p. 133

rebels, and Brittany was described as being in 'a state of anarchy', while *General de Division* Dufour was reported as having passed through Nantes at the head of one of the 200-strong *colonnes mobiles*.¹⁸³⁴ However, such measures never came close to achieving the 'destruction', 'extermination' 'pulverisation' or 'depopulation' which they promised to visit upon the rebels;¹⁸³⁵ as Broers observed, 'mass slaughter took place over so prolonged a period that it did not really amount to mass slaughter'.¹⁸³⁶ Consequently, the threat of insurrection in the region continued unabated, and in late October, D'Auvergne declared that 'every report' in his possession indicated that the rebels were 'in better and more formidable array than they have ever yet been'.¹⁸³⁷ As a result, it was decided to make an attempt to land a consignment of supplies on the French coast,¹⁸³⁸ but although 2,000 stand of arms and 100 kegs of ammunition were delivered, the arrival of the Republicans prevented the delivery of seventy kegs containing 35,000 rounds of ball cartridge.¹⁸³⁹

Moreover, the psychological impact of their support for the royalist insurgency can be seen to have long outlasted the involvement of the British government in the affairs of the Western Provinces.¹⁸⁴⁰ After the Peace of Amiens, a number of critical blows were dealt to the operations of *La Correspondence*: the leaking of the Cadoudal-Pichegru Plot (1804),¹⁸⁴¹ the emergence of a number of

¹⁸³⁴ TNA, FO 95/613, D'Auvergne to Woodford, May 6th 1799; and FO 95/605/114, D'Auvergne to Windham, August 8th 1799

¹⁸³⁵ Bell, *The First Total War*, pp. 158-159

¹⁸³⁶ Broers, 'The Concept of 'Total War'', pp. 258-259

¹⁸³⁷ BL, Add MS 37866, D'Auvergne to Windham, October 26th 1799

¹⁸³⁸ TNA, FO 95/613, D'Auvergne to Woodford, January 29th 1800

¹⁸³⁹ BL, Add MS 37867, D'Auvergne to Windham, January 29th 1800

¹⁸⁴⁰ TNA, HO 99/3, Circular to Don and Doyle, September 17th 1807

¹⁸⁴¹ St Vincent to Lord Keith, March 8th 1804, reproduced in Bonner Smith (ed.), *Letters of Earl St. Vincent*, Vol. I, pp. 400-401

'renegade' *chouans* in London¹⁸⁴² and, most seriously of all, the betrayal of Prigent by Bouchard in 1808.¹⁸⁴³ Even so, the fact that the Channel Islands remained in British hands led the French government to fixate upon the image of 'a platform of anti-Napoleonic intrigue [only] twenty kilometres from the French coast',¹⁸⁴⁴ Jersey being described by *Le Moniteur* as a refuge for 'hundreds of brigands, assassins [and] firebugs'.¹⁸⁴⁵ Likewise, although several political manoeuvres¹⁸⁴⁶ had induced the majority of *émigrés* to return to France or lay down their arms,¹⁸⁴⁷ those that remained in exile continued to pose a threat, with Prigent being identified as 'the principal agent of the clandestine correspondence with Jersey'.¹⁸⁴⁸ Finally, even though French countermeasures forced D'Auvergne to suspend *La Correspondence* in May 1807, Puisaye persuaded Castlereagh to recommence operations just five months later, albeit as an organisation committed to espionage.¹⁸⁴⁹

Practicalities of Succour – The Central Role of the Channel Islands

Although bracketed under the umbrella of 'covert operations', the role of the bailiwicks as a conduit for counter-Revolutionary activity was a *de facto* open secret; indeed, this aspect of their strategic value was one of the justifications for the planned French invasion of 1794 (see chapter three).¹⁸⁵⁰ However, in spite of the number of *émigrés* who volunteered to undertake missions to the

¹⁸⁴² TNA, WO 1/925/53, D'Auvergne to Shere, May 26th 1806; and WO 1/925/89, D'Auvergne to Shere, October 20th 1806

¹⁸⁴³ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, pp. 116; and Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent', 314

¹⁸⁴⁴ Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent', 311

¹⁸⁴⁵ Ashelford, *In the English Service*, p. 115

¹⁸⁴⁶ On July 15th 1801, Napoleon signed the *Concordat* with Pope Pius VII, which reconciled the Catholic Church to the French State. In April 26th 1802, a General Amnesty permitted an estimated 52,000 *émigrés* to return to France.

¹⁸⁴⁷ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 252-253

¹⁸⁴⁸ Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent', 312-313

¹⁸⁴⁹ Ibid, 326; and Sparrow, *Secret Service*, p. 335-337

¹⁸⁵⁰ Cormack, *Revolution and Political Conflict*, p. 261

Continent, initial attempts suffered from poor organisation; in addition to his later dispute with D'Auvergne (see chapter eight),¹⁸⁵¹ June 1793 saw Falle come into conflict with Craig. While the latter had become convinced that St. Malo would offer little resistance, and that the Bretons possessed both 'a fanatical spirit of religion' and an 'incredible detestation of their new priests', the former continued to send his own agents to the region, to the 'embarrassment' of Craig's operations.¹⁸⁵² The elimination of such professional disagreements was critical for maximising the potential for success, but all the more so because of the fact that the leaders of the various insurgent groups 'hated each other as much as they hated the republicans'.¹⁸⁵³ Consequently, while the *émigrés* bombarded Westminster with grandiose plans for the insurgency,¹⁸⁵⁴ the British government refusing to countenance the provision of more than 4,700 men in total,¹⁸⁵⁵ since large-scale collaboration would require a port,¹⁸⁵⁶ while much of the Normandy coast was 'unfavourable' for even small-scale landings.¹⁸⁵⁷

Although such difficulties could not be overcome by the badgering of ministers, the theoretical ability to exploit the geographic position of the Channel Islands enabled the British government to answer their most ardent critics among the royalist leadership.¹⁸⁵⁸ In his attempts to ensure viable communication between the two parties, D'Auvergne was able to draw upon the services of several

¹⁸⁵¹ TNA, FO 95/604/1, D'Auvergne to Dundas, October 20th, 1794; and FO 95/605/3, D'Auvergne to Windham, November 17th 1794

¹⁸⁵² King, 'The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists', pp. 60, 63 and 68

¹⁸⁵³ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 151

¹⁸⁵⁴ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. II. p. 350

¹⁸⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 214

¹⁸⁵⁶ SJA, L/F/08/A/13, 'Moira to Craig Regarding the 63rd and 78th Regts. of Foot to be Part of His Force', December 1st 1793; and Warren to Spencer, July 10th and 20th 1795, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. II, pp. 82-83 and 86-87

¹⁸⁵⁷ SJA, L/F/08/A/15, Moira to Balcarres, December 3rd 1793; L/F/08/A/19, Balcarres to Moira, December 13th 1793; TNA, FO 95/613, D'Auvergne to Woodford, November 5th 1799; and SJA, L/F/95/A/25, Don to Doyle, November 27th 1807

¹⁸⁵⁸ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I. p. 140

highly experienced pilots, often veterans of the prototype network which had been established by Falle in 1792.¹⁸⁵⁹ For example, the Chief Guide for Brittany – identified by the code-name Hue – was described as having ‘served with great fidelity since the beginning of the War’, and the wage which he was allotted in D’Auvergne’s accounts was significantly greater than that paid to any of his colleagues.¹⁸⁶⁰ Furthermore, when faced with Puisaye’s unreasonable expectations *vis-à-vis* the scale of British assistance and reinforcement (see above), the émigré community of the Channel Islands represented a potential alternative source of manpower. By March 1794, around 800 *émigrés* were reported as serving in British pay as part of the Jersey garrison,¹⁸⁶¹ with 667 serving in Castries’ Regiment alone by 1796.¹⁸⁶² In addition, between 600 and 1,000 refugees from both bailiwicks were induced – not without difficulty – to serve in the four *Corps d’Émigrés* intended to support the Quiberon Landings by means of a diversionary attack.¹⁸⁶³

While the argument for maintenance of the Channel Islands as a forward base was founded upon the assumption that their possession improved the efficiency of communication between the British government and its allies in the Western Provinces,¹⁸⁶⁴ this did not always translate into reality. In addition to delays caused by inclement conditions (see chapter eight), it is evident that Carrier was keeping the French government well-informed as to British operations in the region.¹⁸⁶⁵ As early as March 1795, D’Auvergne voiced concerns that ‘the coast

¹⁸⁵⁹ Cobban, ‘Channel Islands’ Correspondence’, 49

¹⁸⁶⁰ SJA, A/A2/1, List of Agents, undated

¹⁸⁶¹ SJA, L/F/97/M2/39, De Carteret, *Greffier*, to *The Times*, March 15th 1794

¹⁸⁶² SJA, L/F/106/A/1, ‘Returns for the Garrison of the Island of Jersey’, April 1st 1796

¹⁸⁶³ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, pp. 213-216 and Vol. II, p. 292

¹⁸⁶⁴ ‘Orders received by Saumarez from the Admiralty, October 18th, 1793’, reproduced in Ross, *Saumarez Correspondence*, Vol. I p. 100; and SJA, L/F/08/A/12, Craig to Moira, November 28th 1793

¹⁸⁶⁵ ‘Carrier to the Committee of Public Safety, November 11th, 1793’, reproduced in Carrier, *Correspondence*, p. 188

is now so extremely guarded by sea [that we cannot] with our feeble means present ourselves there',¹⁸⁶⁶ while the following year saw him present the following ultimatum to Windham. 'I cannot too much impress it on Your Excellency', he wrote, 'how fruitless all our endeavours in this quarter will be, unless something more respectable in point of force than my light vessels, assists us to keep these pirates in order'.¹⁸⁶⁷ In addition, the letter included thinly-veiled accusations against Strachan and Smith – it being implied that they had placed their own interests ahead of their orders to assist his agents – but such complaints may well have been driven by D'Auvergne's lack of opportunities to secure his own share of prize money.¹⁸⁶⁸

However, it is evident that D'Auvergne well understood both the limitations with which the Service was confronted and the effectiveness of French counter-measures. For example, when Sir Sidney Smith proposed to establish an advanced post on the Chausey Islands, D'Auvergne observed that the nearby French coast was 'so much guarded' that any vessels attempting to cross from thence would be under constant threat of attack.¹⁸⁶⁹ Even from the relative security of the Channel Islands, the vessels of *La Correspondence* were all too often intercepted; in May 1796 alone, three attempts to convey supplies from Jersey to the *chouans* were thwarted by a squadron based at St. Malo. Though 'contemptible in [its] enumeration', it was nonetheless 'disproportionably superior in force', to the vessels under D'Auvergne's command,¹⁸⁷⁰ and the latter declared that he had been '[deprived of] the possibility of landing scarcely

¹⁸⁶⁶ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 219

¹⁸⁶⁷ TNA, FO 95/605/50, D'Auvergne to Windham, May 5th 1796

¹⁸⁶⁸ TNA FO 95/612/28, D'Auvergne to Nepean, February 14th 1800; and BL, Add MS 37867, D'Auvergne to Windham, February 26th 1800

¹⁸⁶⁹ TNA, FO 95/605/41, D'Auvergne to Windham, March 3rd 1796

¹⁸⁷⁰ TNA, FO 95/605/50, D'Auvergne to Windham, May 5th 1796

a single grain of gunpowder'.¹⁸⁷¹ Likewise in June 1797, D'Auvergne begged that an additional frigate might be assigned – at least temporarily – to the protection of his vessels, since a recent attempt to convey a group of Breton agents to the opposite coast having been abandoned after a patrolling enemy squadron had 'forced them back and chased them [to Guernsey]'.¹⁸⁷²

Similarly, although strategy of asymmetric warfare employed by the *chouans* proved highly effective in disrupting Republican operations in the heavily wooded areas of Brittany and the Maine,¹⁸⁷³ the French were able to contain and limit their impact with the minimum expenditure of manpower. For example, while Rossignol's 'Army of the Coast of Brest' included a total of 43,000 troops, only 7,000 of these – 16.28% – ever engaged in counter-insurgency operations in the eastern part of Ille-et-Vilaine. Moreover, even after Hoche was permitted to strip Fougères, Vitré, La Guerche, and Châteaubriant of troops in order to enable him to crush Charette's forces south of the Loire, the remaining regulars, national guards and militia proved sufficient to prevent the royalists from making any significant impact north of the Loire.¹⁸⁷⁴ By late 1795, the extent to which counter-insurgency operations had succeeded in quietening the *chouans*¹⁸⁷⁵ was reflected by the response to angry complaints from Puisaye concerning the paucity of supplies landed on the French coast.¹⁸⁷⁶ As was noted by both D'Auvergne and Falle, in spite of every effort having been made by their confidential agents,¹⁸⁷⁷ it was often the case that the royalists were prevented

¹⁸⁷¹ TNA, FO 95/605/51, D'Auvergne to Windham, May, Undated, 1796

¹⁸⁷² TNA, FO 95/605/87, D'Auvergne to Windham, June 27th 1797

¹⁸⁷³ TNA, FO 95/605/18, D'Auvergne to Windham, July 27th 1795

¹⁸⁷⁴ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, pp. 264-265

¹⁸⁷⁵ BL, Add MS 37861, D'Auvergne to Anon, June 21st 1796 and D'Auvergne to Dundas, June 27th 1796

¹⁸⁷⁶ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 432

¹⁸⁷⁷ TNA, PC 1/117B, D'Auvergne to Dundas, April 25th 1795

from reaching the rendezvous, or that the supplies were intercepted by the Republicans while being unloaded.¹⁸⁷⁸

Co-Ordination of Counter-Revolutionary Activity

As effective as French counter-measures may have been, a far more serious problem with which D'Auvergne was confronted in his attempts to translate the expectations of the royalist leaders into reality was the difficulty of establishing co-ordination between the various parties. While traditional scholarship on both sides has portrayed the insurgency as a united movement, the reality is that tensions between individual leaders ran so deep that it was almost impossible for them to cooperate,¹⁸⁷⁹ even in defence of their own interests.¹⁸⁸⁰ Indeed, the Vendée may have seen 'the whole [region] mobilised against the Republic', but the *Chouannerie* never amounted to more than a localised war of *coups-de-main* and ambushes, with large swathes of the province remaining firmly under the control of the Republic.¹⁸⁸¹ Thus, while D'Auvergne reported that the failure of Quiberon had nonetheless left the *chouans* 'undiminished' in spirit,¹⁸⁸² and that the individual chiefs continued, even in 1797, to call for a 'prince of the blood' to act as their overall leader,¹⁸⁸³ he readily conceded that they were wholly dependent on outside support. In the months following Quiberon, it was reported that the *chouans* were sustained by rumours of victories secured by

¹⁸⁷⁸ TNA, WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, January 28th 1795; FO 95/605/11, D'Auvergne to Windham, April 15th 1795; and BL, Add MS 37866, D'Auvergne to Windham, D'Auvergne to Anon, November 18th 1799

¹⁸⁷⁹ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I. p. 50 and Vol. II. p. 353

¹⁸⁸⁰ Knight, *Britain against Napoleon*, p. 151

¹⁸⁸¹ Bell, *The First Total War*, p. 171; Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I. pp. 4-5; Mann, 'Les Insurrections Paysannes de l'Ouest', 589; and Sutherland, *The Chouans*, pp. 263-264

¹⁸⁸² TNA, WO 1/921/145, D'Auvergne to Dundas, August 7th 1795

¹⁸⁸³ TNA, WO 1/922/269, 'Intelligence from D'Auvergne', November 2nd 1797

Charette and Stofflet,¹⁸⁸⁴ while in later years, their hopes were said to rest solely on the prospect of aid from Britain and the royalist exiles.¹⁸⁸⁵

As to divisions amongst the leaders of the insurgency, D'Auvergne's reports reveal just how rapidly these served to undermine any hopes that the British may have entertained that the *chouans* or royalists could be utilised as anything more than prospective fifth columnists or guerrillas. Even by January 1796, 'an unfortunate schism' was reported amongst the Breton leaders,¹⁸⁸⁶ and by October 1798, such 'jealous motives and intrigues' had become so widespread that intelligence described the *chouans* as 'hordes of disorderly *banditti*'¹⁸⁸⁷ committing murder and robbery 'without the least remorse'.¹⁸⁸⁸ In 1800, the situation amongst the *chouans* reached a nadir: while 'letters for stores and money', continued to be brought from the Continent, D'Auvergne reported that the chiefs were '[dismayed by] their partial insurrections and inability to oppose the formidable and united mass that hath come against them'.¹⁸⁸⁹ However, as early as 1793, Balcarres had argued that British efforts to assist the *chouans* could be realised only if a solution were found to 'the total want of military subordination among them, their want of confidence in their leaders', and the fact that none of the latter could claim overall command of the insurgency.¹⁸⁹⁰

Although their ability to achieve temporary local superiority and destabilise both civil and military affairs by means of effective asymmetric warfare ensured

¹⁸⁸⁴ TNA, PC 1/117B, D'Auvergne to Dundas, August 31st 1795

¹⁸⁸⁵ TNA, FO 95/605/46, D'Auvergne to Windham, May 28th 1796; and WO 1/922/269, 'Intelligence from D'Auvergne', November 2nd 1797

¹⁸⁸⁶ TNA, PC 1/117B, D'Auvergne to Dundas, January 9th 1796

¹⁸⁸⁷ TNA, FO 95/609, 'Sketch of the Intrigues that have Introduced and Precipitated the Decline, and Almost Complete Extinction of the Royalist Party in the Provinces of Bretagne and the Bas Maine', October 12th 1798

¹⁸⁸⁸ TNA, FO 95/605/103, D'Auvergne to Windham, September 25th 1798

¹⁸⁸⁹ TNA, WO 1/923/119, D'Auvergne to Hutchisson, February 22nd 1800

¹⁸⁹⁰ SJA, L/F/08/A/14, Balcarres to Dundas, December 2nd 1793

the longevity of the *Chouannerie* (see above), decisive victory – as illustrated by the War in the Vendée – depended upon conventional operations.¹⁸⁹¹ Moreover, even when the Bretons were able to unite their scattered warbands and meet the Republicans in strength, they could only keep each band operational for as long as the pressures of rural existence permitted the rank-and-file to abandon their farms.¹⁸⁹² Finally, mention must be made of the lack of unity amongst the royalist dispora, since although more than 3,600 *émigrés* – many veterans of British and Austrian service¹⁸⁹³ – volunteered for Quiberon,¹⁸⁹⁴ and D’Auvergne received countless petitions from men eager join the insurgency,¹⁸⁹⁵ the latter in particular have long been characterised as ‘all chiefs, no braves’.¹⁸⁹⁶ It is evident, therefore, that many of the *émigré* leaders had failed to learn anything from the disasters of 1792-3, when the royalist armies had been undermined by an ‘unseemly competition for prestigious commissions’ and ‘an arrogant conviction that the invasion of France would be a promenade’.¹⁸⁹⁷

The Strength of the Insurgency – Manpower

While recent studies of the royalist insurgency have emphasised the social origins of the movement, particularly the desire to preserve local identity in the face of oppressive edicts such as the *levée en masse*,¹⁸⁹⁸ the importance of charismatic leadership should not be ignored. Mention has been already made of ‘General Gaston’ (see chapter eight), but Charette can be seen as having acquired a similarly legendary reputation, both on the Continent – where he

¹⁸⁹¹ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D’Auvergne*, p. 65

¹⁸⁹² Sutherland, *The Chouans*, p. 282

¹⁸⁹³ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 212

¹⁸⁹⁴ Lempriere, *History*, p. 135

¹⁸⁹⁵ TNA, FO 95/613, D’Auvergne to Woodford, May 21st and June 9th 1799

¹⁸⁹⁶ Kirke, *From the Gun-Room to the Throne*, p. 111

¹⁸⁹⁷ Bell, *The First Total War*, p. 166; and Sutherland, *The Chouans*, p. 3

¹⁸⁹⁸ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, 16-17, 20

drew recruits from as far afield as Normandy¹⁸⁹⁹ – and in Britain, where his exploits were lauded in the press.¹⁹⁰⁰ For example, one obituary claimed that Charette had been left with only ‘400-500 adventures’ in 1793, but had recruited thereafter as many as ‘15,000 [or] 20,000 men’,¹⁹⁰¹ and when news of his ‘defeat and sacrifice’ reached Jersey, the *émigrés* adopted the view that he had been undermined by ‘the penury of his officers’, rather than by any personal failings as a commander.¹⁹⁰² However, while the importance of providing the royalist insurgency with charismatic leadership was clearly acknowledged – D’Auvergne, for example, declared that ‘a new and a skilful leader’ might yet re-ignite the Vendée¹⁹⁰³ – later uprisings in that region¹⁹⁰⁴ were never reported as involving more than a few thousand men.¹⁹⁰⁵

With respect to the actual number of men that the Vendéens were able to unite under their banner, the estimates provided by scholars on both sides of the Channel have been reasonably consistent. While D’Auvergne was furnished with reports that the royalists numbered 60,000,¹⁹⁰⁶ 80,000,¹⁹⁰⁷ or even 165,000 men¹⁹⁰⁸ Balleine and De Venaton both concluded that their true strength could not have been more than 50,000.¹⁹⁰⁹ Moreover, a study carried out at the *Centre Vendéen de Recherches Historiques* estimated that only 30,000 infantry and 1,200 cavalry were engaged in the *Virée de Galerne*, accompanied by

¹⁸⁹⁹ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, p. 275

¹⁹⁰⁰ Anon, *The Scots Magazine* Vol. 57 (Edinburgh, 1795) p. 593

¹⁹⁰¹ Anon, *The Monthly Magazine, or British Register*, Nos. I-V (London, 1796) p. 250

¹⁹⁰² BL, Add MS 37861, ‘Intelligence from D’Auvergne to Portland’, June 20th 1796

¹⁹⁰³ Ibid, D’Auvergne to Windham, May 7th 1796

¹⁹⁰⁴ TNA, FO 95/611, D’Auvergne to Woodford, July 9th 1799

¹⁹⁰⁵ Ibid, D’Auvergne to Windham, October 29th 1799

¹⁹⁰⁶ TNA, WO 1/391, Balcarras to Dundas, November 14th 1793

¹⁹⁰⁷ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I. p. 254

¹⁹⁰⁸ TNA, WO 1/603, ‘Deposition of James Longhurst, Late Prize-Master of the Lugger *Brilliant* of Guernsey’, March 7th 1795

¹⁹⁰⁹ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D’Auvergne*, p. 65; and J.S. de Ventavon, *Jacques Cathelineau: Premier Généralissime de l’Armée Catholique et Royale* (Paris, 1988) p. 123

15,000 to 60,000 non-combatants.¹⁹¹⁰ However, even if the *Grande Armée* which crossed the Loire was only 35,000 strong,¹⁹¹¹ that begs the question as to why they would have conducted a truce when the Army of the West possessed only 24,000 effectives¹⁹¹² and around one sixth¹⁹¹³ of the Army of the Coast of Brest was engaged in fighting the *chouans*.¹⁹¹⁴ Again, it must be emphasised that the claims of the royalist leaders were often at odds with reality: according to Carrier, Charette commanded no more than 3,000 men in 1794, with the total Vendéens strength set at 20,000 men.¹⁹¹⁵ Similarly, Hutt has estimated that only 4,000 men responded to Charette's muster of June 1795,¹⁹¹⁶ while intelligence received by D'Auvergne that same year indicated that the principal Vendéen leaders¹⁹¹⁷ commanded only 65,000 men between them.¹⁹¹⁸

In their attempts to provide succour to the *Chouans*, the British were likewise deceived as to the influence commanded by individual leaders, many of whom were – in common with their counterparts in the Vendée – garnered reputations founded upon a conflation of fact and popular myth. Cadoudal, for example, is described by Balliène as 'a born strategist' possessing 'amazing powers of leadership', and who, at the peak of his powers, was supposed to have been acknowledged as chief by 'all the *chouans* in Brittany'.¹⁹¹⁹ However, if this was ever the case, it certainly did not outlast the attempted assassination of Napoleon in December 1800, since the following years saw D'Auvergne receive

¹⁹¹⁰ J. Hussenet and P. Contant, *'Détruisez la Vendée': Regards Croisés sur les Victimes et Destructons de la Guerre de Vendée* (La Roche Sur Yon, 2007) p. 194

¹⁹¹¹ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 4

¹⁹¹² Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 254

¹⁹¹³ 7,000 out of 43,000 men

¹⁹¹⁴ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, p. 264

¹⁹¹⁵ *The Scots Magazine*, Vol. 56 (Edinburgh, 1794) p. 162

¹⁹¹⁶ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 254

¹⁹¹⁷ Charette – 15,000 effectives; Sapineu – 10,000 effectives; Stofflet – 25,000 effectives; Scepeau – 15,000 effectives.

¹⁹¹⁸ TNA, PC 117/B, D'Auvergne to Dundas, September 7th 1795

¹⁹¹⁹ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, p. 65

numerous complaints with respect to Cadoudal's conduct. In January 1802, for example, he was charged with having left his comrades 'without subsistence [or] asylum out of the country', as well as having 'deceived [them] by unrealised promises',¹⁹²⁰ while other *chouans*, hopeful of the prospective amnesty (see above), accused him of having sought to 'provoke mischief in the neighbouring provinces'.¹⁹²¹ However, British attempts to support the *chouannerie* were hampered further by the *chouan* leaders' habit of vastly over-exaggerating their strength; Solerac having claimed that he might call upon as many as 30,000 men,¹⁹²² and it being reported that Beauchamp had rallied 10,000 *chouans* in support of the Vendéen royalists.¹⁹²³

Despite such exaggerated estimates, it seems reasonable to suggest that British aid to the *chouans* was based on the premise that the latter numbered not more than a few thousand men. Even during Quiberon, Warren spoke of Tineniac as commanding no more than '8,000 *chouans*',¹⁹²⁴ while the amount of supplies granted to D'Auvergne for transmission to Brittany – like those he had endeavoured to send to Charette¹⁹²⁵ – indicate that the British government placed little faith in the claims of Beauchamp or Solerac. In March 1794, for example, D'Auvergne reported having received 3,200 muskets,¹⁹²⁶ while a return of March 1796 revealed that his stores at *Mont Orgueil* contained 100 blunderbusses, 5,500 muskets, 460 pistols and 3,500 sabres.¹⁹²⁷ Moreover, by 1800, it was acknowledged that the Breton insurgency was on the decline: for

¹⁹²⁰ TNA, WO 1/924/1, D'Auvergne to Hobart, January 25th 1802

¹⁹²¹ TNA, WO 1/924/9, D'Auvergne to Hobart, January 26th 1802

¹⁹²² SJA, L/F/08/A/14, Balcarres to Dundas, December 2nd 1793

¹⁹²³ *The Monthly Magazine, or British Register*, Nos. I-V (London, 1796) p. 250

¹⁹²⁴ Warren to Spencer, July 20th 1795, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. II, pp. 86-87

¹⁹²⁵ TNA, WO 1/390, Anon to Robrie, February 1st 1794; and King, 'The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists', p. 143

¹⁹²⁶ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. II, pp. 428-429

¹⁹²⁷ TNA, WO 1/921/371, 'D'Auvergne to Huskisson, Stores held at Mont Orgueil', March 18th 1796

example, Châtillon¹⁹²⁸ was said to command no more than 2,000 men, only one third of whom possessed muskets, while even with the support of his 'divisional chiefs', Cadoudal was reckoned to be able to muster only 3,000 men.¹⁹²⁹ As for the other leaders mentioned in this report, estimates of their individual forces ranged from as few as 800 to as many as 3,000 men, lending support to Sutherland's argument no more than a few thousand *chouans* joined the Vendéens during the *Virée de Galerne*.¹⁹³⁰

The Difficulties Surrounding Intelligence

As was highlighted in the discussion of the role played by the Channel Islands within the context of intelligence-gathering, one problem frequently encountered by D'Auvergne, and complained of by Ministers, was the contradictory nature of reports received concerning the royalists (see chapter eight).¹⁹³¹ Both the over-ambition and arrogance of the various royalist leaders and the inability of the insurgents to act in concert can be seen to have contributed to breakdowns in the gathering of intelligence concerning the state of affairs in the Western Provinces. During his negotiations with Balcarres and Craig with respect to the proposition of an armed intervention in support of the *Virée en Galerne*, Moira observed that 'nothing can be done [without] an answer from the royalists, but which all our plans must be regulated'.¹⁹³² During Moira's Expedition, for example, a large force of British troops was mustered at Guernsey,¹⁹³³ but until such time as reliable intelligence could be gained from Brittany – particularly

¹⁹²⁸ Commander of the *Armée Catholique et Royale du Bas Anjou et Haute Bretagne*

¹⁹²⁹ TNA, WO 1/923/1, D'Auvergne to Twiss and Taylor, undated, 1800

¹⁹³⁰ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, pp. 263-264

¹⁹³¹ TNA, FO 95/605/111, D'Auvergne to Windham, February 19th 1799

¹⁹³² SJA, L/F/08/A/18, 'Moira to Balcarres Advising of the Benefits of Capturing St. Malo', December 10th 1793

¹⁹³³ SJA, L/F/08/A/13, Moira to Craig, December 1st 1793

with respect to the best route by which to make contact with the royalists, there was no prospect of them being landed.¹⁹³⁴ The deciding factor was simple: while Moira agreed that 'the force of the Republicans...has been much exaggerated',¹⁹³⁵ and that the coast was 'naked from Granville to St. Malo',¹⁹³⁶ his orders forbade him to take any action unless convinced that 'a landing might be affected with security and advantage'.¹⁹³⁷

Unfortunately, due to the 'embryonic' nature of the British secret service – particularly during the first few years of the Great French War (see chapter eight) – there was no definitive method by which to verify the accuracy of the insurgents' stated needs. Confronted with a never-ending demand for arms, powder, and money from both the Vendéen generals and the *chouan* leaders, D'Auvergne's final decision as to the worthiness of each application was often based as much on the character of the agent from whom it was received as the availability of corroborative evidence.¹⁹³⁸ For example, having met with Le Comte de la Rocque, then carrying despatches to Britain on behalf of the *chouan* leader Frotté, D'Auvergne described the former as being '[unlikely] to exaggerate upon light grounds the position or the means of his associates' or '[engage in] deception through false or exaggerated reports'.¹⁹³⁹ Even when it was possible to secure independent evidence to corroborate reports received from the insurgents or their emissaries, episodes such as the 'Gaston' affair reflect the fact that the British government remained, in the early years of the War, ignorant as to the identity of the royalist leaders.

¹⁹³⁴ SJA, L/F/08/A/15, Moira to Balcarres, December 3rd 1793

¹⁹³⁵ SJA, L/F/08/A/18, Moira to Balcarres, December 10th 1793

¹⁹³⁶ SJA, L/F/08/A/16, Balcarres to Moira, December 8th 1793

¹⁹³⁷ King, 'The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists', pp. 107-108

¹⁹³⁸ TNA, WO 1/921/69, D'Auvergne to Dundas, June 15th 1795; FO 95/605/20, D'Auvergne to Windham, August 18th, 1795; and FO 95/605/45, D'Auvergne to Windham, March 18th 1796

¹⁹³⁹ TNA, FO 95/605/46, D'Auvergne to Windham, March 28th 1796

Perhaps the best illustration of the manner in which poor British attempts to aid the royalists – at least during the early years of the Great French War – were compromised by a shortage of accurate intelligence is provided by the *Virée de Galerne* in late 1793. Having crossed the Loire in October, the Vendéen forces marched through Maine to the Channel coast,¹⁹⁴⁰ and news of their progress, at least for a time, raised the British government's hopes of being able to provide the insurgents with large-scale support. As highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, the landing of supplies on the French coast – at least in anything other than relatively small quantities – was generally considered impossible without first securing a port or bay which might be exploited as a beachhead. St. Malo was regarded as ideal for the purpose, but in spite of having agreed with Balcarras' view that 'the capture of that town would be very advantageous', Moira admitted of his having insufficient intelligence to allow for a judgement as to 'the rational prospect of success in an [assault]'.¹⁹⁴¹ However, he felt that even the entire strength of the royalist army would prove insufficient, and that the preferred strategy would be to seize one of the smaller bays on that part of the coast.¹⁹⁴²

Even when convinced that he was in a position to act in accordance with his orders and affect a landing 'with security and advantage' (see above), Moira's efforts to support the royalist forces continued to be undermined by incomplete or inaccurate intelligence. Balcarres, for example, reported that the cutter which he had sent to scout for two French ships-of-the-line supposedly patrolling in the vicinity of St. Malo had failed to locate the enemy, and also that efforts to send 'two gentlemen' to make contact with both the *chouans* and Vendéens had

¹⁹⁴⁰ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 4

¹⁹⁴¹ SJA, L/F/08/A/18, Moira to Balcarres, December 10th 1793

¹⁹⁴² SJA, L/F/08/A/15, Moira to Balcarres, December 3rd 1793

been thwarted by bad weather.¹⁹⁴³ Similarly, reports of the disposition and size of the Republican forces were highly inconsistent: while Solerac reported that there were 10,000 men at Granville, Trellon reported that the garrison of that town amounted to no more than 5,000 men, with a further 10,000 men marching to reinforce them.¹⁹⁴⁴ Most serious of all were the erroneous reports concerning the supposed capture of Rennes by the Vendéen forces,¹⁹⁴⁵ since they served to encourage misplaced hopes that the royalists would be able to return to the coast and link up with a British landing.¹⁹⁴⁶ In addition, even if the inaccuracy of such reports was ultimately brought to light, the hope which they inspired with respect to the potential success of the royalist armies meant that the British continued to be distracted by rumours of their being engaged against Caen and other towns in the Cotentin.¹⁹⁴⁷

Failures within *La Correspondence*

Although the potential for the ‘malfunction’ of *La Correspondence* as a means of intelligence-gathering has been already discussed (see chapter eight), its effectiveness with respect to enabling the provision of aid to the insurgency was likewise fallible. Often, the impact of French counter-measures and the ever-present disruption caused by the prevailing weather and sea conditions¹⁹⁴⁸ were compounded by the unreliability of individual personnel¹⁹⁴⁹ and the inability of

¹⁹⁴³ SJA, L/F/08/A/19, Balcarres to Moira, December 13th 1793

¹⁹⁴⁴ SJA, L/F/08/A/14, Balcarres to Dundas, December 2nd 1793

¹⁹⁴⁵ SJA, L/F/08/A/17, ‘Moira to Balcarres Regarding the Supposed Capture of Rennes by the Royalists’, December 8th 1793

¹⁹⁴⁶ SJA, L/F/08/A/27, ‘Moira to MacBride Regarding the Receipt of Intelligence Concerning the Royalists’, December 27th 1793

¹⁹⁴⁷ SJA, L/F/08/A/29, Moira to MacBride, December 30th 1793; and L/F/08/A/30, ‘Moira to MacBride, Intelligence from Jersey re. Royalist Activity in the Cotentin’, December 30th 1793

¹⁹⁴⁸ BL, Add MS 37966, D’Auvergne to Unknown, November 18th 1799

¹⁹⁴⁹ SJA, L/F/08/A/14, Balcarres to Dundas, December 2nd 1793

the royalists to secure and hold a permanent landing-place.¹⁹⁵⁰ However, D'Auvergne's correspondence reveals two far more serious problems: on the one hand, the suspected presence of French agents in St. Helier; and on the other, the infiltration of *La Correspondence* and the recruitment of several personnel as double agents. During the Peace of Amiens, and amid the concerns over the conduct of Cadoudal (see above), he warned the British government that a spy named 'Chessy' was passing the names of suspected members of *La Correspondence* to the Directory.¹⁹⁵¹ However, as with his counterparts in Paris, D'Auvergne had established a number of important security measures, giving orders that the identity of his agents should be disclosed only to senior military officers, and that dispatches should be delivered 'without recourse to any other part of the Island'.¹⁹⁵²

The necessity for these countermeasures was exacerbated by the intimacy of life in the Channel Islands: as D'Auvergne observed, St. Helier's relatively small population meant that his agents were 'missed in a few hours absence', and that 'nefarious knaves give notice of [their] every movement'.¹⁹⁵³ Seeking to prevent a case of 'careless talk costing lives', D'Auvergne ordered that no French person involved in *La Correspondence* was to be permitted to visit St. Helier, but that all were to be sequestered in *Mont Orgueil*.¹⁹⁵⁴ Though he had previously claimed that his 'intimate acquaintance with the country, language and inhabitants will give me great opportunity of procuring information on all

¹⁹⁵⁰ *SJA*, L/F/08/A/15, Moira to Balcarres, December 3rd 1793; and *BL*, Add MS 37966, Intelligence from D'Auvergne, November 1799

¹⁹⁵¹ Sparrow, *Secret Service*, p. 271

¹⁹⁵² *TNA*, FO 95/604/1, D'Auvergne to Dundas, October 8th, 1794

¹⁹⁵³ *Ibid*

¹⁹⁵⁴ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 165

occasions',¹⁹⁵⁵ D'Auvergne did not perceive the same ability in those French *émigrés* whom he employed. Rather, he justified his actions by stating that 'the indiscretion of that volatile people, the French' led to him hearing the supposedly secret missions of his agents discussed openly in the taverns of St. Helier.¹⁹⁵⁶ Indeed, surviving intelligence reports indicate many of these agents as having been far from discrete: referring to the royalists' failure to capture Granville in 1793, D'Auvergne accused Solerac of having been 'turned' by the Republicans and having fed false information to his erstwhile comrades.¹⁹⁵⁷

As was touched upon during the discussion of suspected 'subversive' elements within the Channel Islands' émigré community (see chapter five), the most serious failure within *La Correspondence* came about as a result of the capture of Bouchard and his subsequent betrayal of Prigent. While the latter was described by Summerscale as a 'mediocre agent' who 'collapsed before the police like a neophyte',¹⁹⁵⁸ Guerrin has argued that such a view is unfair, and that Prigent's swift and detailed confession was both a 'logical and human' reaction in a man faced with the prospect of both torture and death.¹⁹⁵⁹ Even so, the consequences of this episode provide clear evidence, not only of the fragility of *La Correspondence* as an organisation, but also the damage which might be inflicted if even a single agent could be induced to desert the royalist cause, especially since their treachery would not be immediately obvious. In the case of Bouchard and Prigent, for example, D'Auvergne not only made several failed attempts to contact the two agents, but when the former returned to Jersey,

¹⁹⁵⁵ TNA, FO 95/605/1, D'Auvergne to Windham, November 4th 1794

¹⁹⁵⁶ TNA, FO 95/604/1, D'Auvergne to Dundas, October 8th, 1794

¹⁹⁵⁷ SJA, L/F/08/A/14, Balcarres to Dundas, December 2nd 1793

¹⁹⁵⁸ P. Summerscale, 'Le Parti Royaliste en 1807: D'après un Mémoire de Puisaye Conservé au British Muséum', *Revue de l'Institut Napoléon*, 133 (1977), cited in Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent', 315

¹⁹⁵⁹ Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent', 315 and 330

failed to realise that Bouchard had bought his freedom by agreeing to lure several leading members of *La Correspondence* into a trap.¹⁹⁶⁰ Although this did not bring an end to the passing of intelligence from the French coast to the Channel Islands,¹⁹⁶¹ it did result in the activities of *La Correspondence* being severely curtailed during the latter third of the Great French War.¹⁹⁶²

However, on several occasions, *La Correspondence* appears to have been compromised by indiscretions on a more 'structural' level: in an attempt to ensure the efficient flow of aid to the insurgents, D'Auvergne and his associates established a number of safe-houses on the Continent.¹⁹⁶³ Unfortunately, the above-mentioned indiscretions of individual agents meant that these properties were apt to be compromised, with severe losses in terms of equipment, as well as the arrest of any personnel unfortunate enough to be hiding therein. In late 1794, Dundas was informed that 'a treacherous pariah' had betrayed the depot to which he had been conducted, and the resultant capture of thirty barrels of powder and a few stand of arms¹⁹⁶⁴ was a coup for the Republicans, who were said to be reduced to bartering their powder for bread.¹⁹⁶⁵ Likewise, the need to rely on local guides in order to ensure contact with the insurgent leaders was likewise a source of duplicity; in 1799, it was reported that agents of the Princes were attempting to subvert control of *La Correspondence* by 'exciting jealousy' between them.¹⁹⁶⁶ While this threat appears to have been neutralised, the following years witnessed more regular breakdowns, and by mid-1800,

¹⁹⁶⁰ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, pp. 115-116; and Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent', 325-326

¹⁹⁶¹ TNA, HO 98/17, Don to Beckett, August 13th 1812

¹⁹⁶² Sparrow, *Secret Service*, pp. 337-338

¹⁹⁶³ SJA, A/A2/1, Entry for 'Macé' in 'List of Agents'

¹⁹⁶⁴ TNA, WO 1/921/19, D'Auvergne to Dundas, December 31st, 1794

¹⁹⁶⁵ TNA, WO 1/921/69, D'Auvergne to Dundas, June 15th 1795

¹⁹⁶⁶ TNA, FO 95/605/111, D'Auvergne to Windham, August 8th 1799

D'Auvergne was warning that 'our communications have been much intercepted by the indiscretion of the persons that have lately passed'.¹⁹⁶⁷

The final area in which British support for insurgency activities appears to have been compromised on the Continental side of the chain is related to the provision of money. Given Puisaye's vision for the *Catholic and Royal Army of Brittany*, the royalists were constantly demanding bullion – either in Sterling, Dollars or *Louis d'Or*¹⁹⁶⁸ – with which to pay their troops, and even after Quiberon, Puisaye presented D'Auvergne with a demand for the equivalent of £28,000 per month.¹⁹⁶⁹ Such demands were entirely divorced from reality – in October 1796, for example, Puisaye received only 700 *Livres*¹⁹⁷⁰ – and even though much larger amounts were often sent, including a sum of between 15,000 and 20,000 *Louis d'Or* which was earmarked for Chatillion in February 1800, these were often left unaccounted for.¹⁹⁷¹ Despite the fact that money received from Britain also enabled the royalists to purchase arms and supplies from French sources and bribe Republican troops into deserting,¹⁹⁷² it is evident that a considerable proportion of the funds were embezzled by the insurgent leadership. Hutt, for example, has referred to a dispatch by which Puisaye was informed that £6,000 had been sent across to Jersey, but over a month passed, and Puisaye complained that he had received a mere 1,000 *Louis d'Or*.¹⁹⁷³

¹⁹⁶⁷ TNA, FO 95/613, D'Auvergne to Woodford, June 22nd 1800

¹⁹⁶⁸ BL, Add MS 37862, D'Auvergne to Windham, July 28th 1796; Add MS 37866, D'Auvergne to Anon, November 27th, 1799; Add MS 37867, D'Auvergne to Anon, January 3rd 1800; and Add MS 37868, Intelligence from D'Auvergne, February 24th 1801

¹⁹⁶⁹ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 379

¹⁹⁷⁰ TNA, FO 95/605/72, D'Auvergne to Windham, October 24th 1796

¹⁹⁷¹ TNA, WO 1/923/119, 'D'Auvergne to Huskisson: Intelligence from Brest Concerning the Disposition of the Royalists', February 22nd 1800

¹⁹⁷² Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 353

¹⁹⁷³ Ibid, pp. 467-468

Success of Assistance

As Kirke observed, it would be ‘impossible and unprofitable to give in detail all the various descents...made upon the French coast’:¹⁹⁷⁴ not least in light of King’s observation that *La Correspondence* became ‘as regular and normal as the postal service in England (see chapter eight).¹⁹⁷⁵ However, while it is beyond the scope of this thesis to engage in a comprehensive numeration of all the supplies which were sent to the royalists, it is possible to provide at least a partial assessment of the success with which consignments were delivered from Jersey. D’Auvergne’s declaration that he was ‘ready to give [the royalists] anything at their disposition which they can receive’ would certainly appear sincere, as does his insistence of having been ‘zealous’ in his attachment to the duty entrusted to him.¹⁹⁷⁶ However, while it is true that he was often successful in orchestrating the landing of considerable quantities of supplies, the reality is that the efforts of both D’Auvergne and his agents were reliant upon too many variables beyond their control. Although December 1799 saw an attempt to deliver more than 1,000 stand-of-arms and 60,000 rounds of ball cartridge to Mercier’s *chouans*,¹⁹⁷⁷ such an operation was exceptional; in the majority of cases, only small consignments were landed, or else the opportunity was lost or the supplies intercepted.

Most importantly, the correspondence which has survived serves to illustrate the extent to which the attempts to carry out the landing of supplies were often thwarted – or at least limited – by the fundamental necessity of operating in

¹⁹⁷⁴ Kirke, *From the Gun-Room to the Throne*, p. 111

¹⁹⁷⁵ King, ‘Jersey: Centre D’Espionnage’, 434

¹⁹⁷⁶ BL, Add MS 37863, D’Auvergne to Windham, November 8th and 22nd 1796

¹⁹⁷⁷ BL, Add MS 37866, D’Auvergne to Windham, December 1st 1799

optimum sea conditions and under cover of darkness. In March 1796, it was reported that ‘a confidential gentleman’ had succeeded in delivering 105 muskets and 178 quarter-barrels of powder to an unidentified party in the interior of Brittany, and that it was intended to make two similar attempts ‘when the Moon permits’.¹⁹⁷⁸ However, it is clear that such opportunities remained infrequent even during the long winter nights: in January 1800, D’Auvergne reported that ‘the advanced state of the Moon did not permit us to land any other effects but a few quintals¹⁹⁷⁹ of powder, and a few cavalry swords,¹⁹⁸⁰ and that attempts to make contact with Prigent in February 1801 were likewise disrupted.¹⁹⁸¹ Similarly, although November 1799 saw the *chouans* under Mercier successfully take delivery of 600 stand-of-arms, 30,000 rounds of ball cartridge, and sufficient powder for 15,000 to 20,000 rounds, it was noted that ‘a violent storm’ had disrupted the landing, preventing the offloading of the remainder.¹⁹⁸² In addition, D’Auvergne observed that his efforts to land even small consignments would remain largely ineffectual ‘unless the royalists come themselves in moderate numbers to the shore’,¹⁹⁸³ or were able to appoint ‘persons of enterprise’ with whom he might make contact.¹⁹⁸⁴

Consequently, while the British government may have had some success in utilising the Channel Islands as a base from which to provide aid to both the royalists and *chouans*, the success of this endeavour was limited at best. The vigilance of French patrols,¹⁹⁸⁵ the inconsistency of British military support,¹⁹⁸⁶

¹⁹⁷⁸ TNA, FO 95/606, D’Auvergne to Woodford, March 8th 1796

¹⁹⁷⁹ One quintal was equivalent to either one hundred kilograms or one hundred lbs; from his other letters, it is likely that D’Auvergne referred to the latter.

¹⁹⁸⁰ BL, Add MS 37867, D’Auvergne to Anon, January 8th 1800

¹⁹⁸¹ BL, Add MS 37868, Intelligence from D’Auvergne, February 24th 1801

¹⁹⁸² TNA, FO 95/611, D’Auvergne to Windham, November 5th 1799

¹⁹⁸³ BL, Add MS 37861, Intelligence from D’Auvergne to Windham, June 16th 1796

¹⁹⁸⁴ BL, Add MS 37866, D’Auvergne to Windham, October 26th 1799

¹⁹⁸⁵ TNA, FO 95/605/50, D’Auvergne to Windham, May 5th 1796

the all-too-often dangerous local sea conditions,¹⁹⁸⁷ and in-fighting between key personnel¹⁹⁸⁸ all combined to prevent the provision of the kind of support that was anticipated at both ends of the network. Certainly, the stores which became stockpiled in Jersey prove that the British government treated insurgent groups in the Western Provinces as a serious investment; as late as September 1799, D'Auvergne received a consignment of 6,000 lbs of gunpowder and 2,000 stand of arms 'to be sent to the French coast as you shall judge proper'.¹⁹⁸⁹ Similarly, his stores in November 1799 amounted to 1,830 French muskets with 116,000 rounds, 5,535lbs of powder in 123 barrels, four French cannon – two 8-pdrs and two 4-pdrs – and two 8½-inch sea mortars, all amply supplied with both solid and case-shot.¹⁹⁹⁰ However, despite the potential importance of these supplies – in autumn 1795, only one in every three *chouans* is believed to have possessed a firearm¹⁹⁹¹ – D'Auvergne and his associates were simply unable to meet the expectations of the royalist leadership.

However, even if the provision of aid via the Channel Islands did not result in Puisaye being able to realise his dream of an army of fifty divisions,¹⁹⁹² this aspect of *La Correspondence* can still be regarded as having enjoyed sufficient success to be of strategic value to the British. Throughout the 1790s, the potential threat of a royalist insurgency remained a significant distraction to the French authorities,¹⁹⁹³ and in order to ensure the maintenance of control in the Western Provinces, it was necessary for tens of thousands of troops to be

¹⁹⁸⁶ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 219

¹⁹⁸⁷ SJA, L/F/08/A/19, Balcarres to Moira, December 13th 1793; TNA, FO 95/613, D'Auvergne to Woodford, November 5th 1799; SJA, L/F/95/A/25, Don to Doyle, November 27th 1807

¹⁹⁸⁸ TNA, FO 95/604/1, D'Auvergne to Dundas, November 4th, 1794

¹⁹⁸⁹ TNA, HO 69/2/21, Woodford to D'Auvergne, September 18th 1799

¹⁹⁹⁰ TNA, FO 95/613, 'Serviceable Stores at the Depot in Jersey for the Royalists', November 1799

¹⁹⁹¹ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, p. 297

¹⁹⁹² Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. II, p. 442

¹⁹⁹³ SJA, L/F/08/A/18, Moira to Balcarres, December 10th 1793; and TNA, WO 1/923/387, D'Auvergne to Hobart, April 1st 1801

continually diverted from other frontiers.¹⁹⁹⁴ Even though the prospect of a major British-backed conventional operation in either the Vendée or Brittany ended in 1795 – Quiberon having destroyed ministerial confidence in any such scheme – the subsequent activities of the *chouans* served to harass the relatively small Republican garrisons north of the Loire.¹⁹⁹⁵ However, perhaps the most important success enjoyed by the Channel Islands as a conduit for subversive warfare was the introduction into the French economy of counterfeit *Assignats*,¹⁹⁹⁶ an aspect of *La Correspondence* for which, unfortunately, little meaningful documentation appears to have survived. In general, the majority of correspondence making reference to the smuggling of forged currency refers simply to the amount dispatched or landed in each consignment,¹⁹⁹⁷ with the occasional mention of the intended recipient.¹⁹⁹⁸

Despite a paucity of documentary evidence, the extent to which this simple economic subterfuge threatened to destabilise the Republican regime can be seen to have played a significant role in creating the conditions within which insurgent activity could continue to flourish. Although the first consignments were intended as payment for the *chouans* in lieu of coinage or bullion, the flooding of France with forged paper currency served to exacerbate the chronic inflation which had been reported as early as 1790. Indeed, March 1795 saw D'Auvergne's agents land over thirty million *Livres* worth of counterfeit *assignats*

¹⁹⁹⁴ 'Carrier to the Committee of Public Safety, November 11th 1793 and January 1st 1794', reproduced in Carrier, *Correspondence*, pp. 88 and 188; and Bell, *The First Total War*, p. 164

¹⁹⁹⁵ TNA, WO 1/923/75, 'D'Auvergne to Twiss and Taylor, Memoir Describing Recent *Chouannerie*, Specifically Divisional Boundaries, Motivation, Morale and Performance', February 27th 1800

¹⁹⁹⁶ TNA, WO 1/607, Falle to Dundas, October 31st, 1794

¹⁹⁹⁷ TNA, FO 95/604/1, D'Auvergne to Dundas, October 20th and 22nd, and November 4th 1794; FO 95/605/7, D'Auvergne to Windham, March 2nd 1795; and WO 1/603, Deposition of James Longhurst, Late Prize-Master of the Lugger *Brilliant* of Guernsey, March 7th 1795

¹⁹⁹⁸ Balleine, *The Tragedy of Philippe D'Auvergne*, pp. 73-74

alongside 2,000 muskets and 100 to 200 barrels of powder,¹⁹⁹⁹ and Puisaye and his associates expressed their fervent belief that 'this war of *assignats* alone...is capable of destroying the Republic'.²⁰⁰⁰ Indeed, while the efforts of D'Auvergne and *La Correspondence* to stimulate and supply a truly effective counter-Revolutionary force may have ultimately failed, the collapse of economic confidence amongst provincial authorities served to compound tensions with the authorities in Paris.²⁰⁰¹ Consequently, it can be clearly seen that the British government was able to exploit localised insurgency activity long after they had been wholly disabused of any pretensions amongst the royalist leadership that British aid might facilitate a large-scale insurrection and the overthrow of the Republic.

Indeed, despite the fragmentary nature of the *Chouannerie* and the inability of Charette and his colleagues to extend their influence beyond the Vendée, the authority of the Republic was not made secure in the Western Provinces until long after the Peace of Amiens.²⁰⁰² Consequently, although incidences of armed insurrection were largely conditional upon the peasant leadership 'transferring whatever ephemeral loyalties they had once felt from the Revolution to Royalism', continued investment in the royalist movement continued to make sound strategic sense.²⁰⁰³ Both the Committee for Public Safety and the Directory remained fearful of the potential for such activity to destabilise their control over the Western Provinces; Carrier having reported that the British intended to use the Channel Islands as a base for an Anglo-

¹⁹⁹⁹ TNA, FO 95/605/7, D'Auvergne to Windham, March 2nd 1795

²⁰⁰⁰ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I, p. 199

²⁰⁰¹ Ibid, p. 63

²⁰⁰² Guerrin, 'L'Arrestation de Prigent', 329

²⁰⁰³ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, p. 13

Émigré invasion, and thereby unite with a rising in the Morbihan.²⁰⁰⁴ Previously, he had warned of the necessity of safeguarding the principal ports against infiltration by British spies, observing that *émigrés* from both Jersey and Guernsey were engaged in clandestine activity in the region.²⁰⁰⁵ That these concerns were based on more than the abovementioned psychological impact of the royalist insurgency is evidenced by the fact that the British were in possession of accurate intelligence to the Secretary at War concerning the defences of Cherbourg and Brest.²⁰⁰⁶

'A History of Wasted Opportunities'?

Ultimately, the success enjoyed by the British government in relation to sustaining the counter-Revolutionary movement – both as a means by which to disrupt the French war effort and destabilise the Western Provinces – should not distract from the reality of the situation. Even when the Western Provinces were described as being 'unquestionably ripe for a revolt', and Craig declared that the royalists might 'be masters of [St. Malo] within in a week',²⁰⁰⁷ relations between the British government and the royalists remained a 'marriage of convenience'. Thus, King not only argued that the potential of the royalist cause was never fully appreciated, but also that the history of *La Correspondence* was one of 'wasted opportunities' arising from 'half-hearted efforts' on the part of the British government. Indeed, she went so far as to conclude that 'if one quarter of the [resources] which were wasted [in Flanders and the West Indies] had

²⁰⁰⁴ 'Carrier to the Committee of Public Safety, January 1st, 1794', reproduced in Carrier, *Correspondence*, p. 188

²⁰⁰⁵ 'Carrier to the Committee of Public Safety, November 11th, 1793', reproduced in *ibid*, p. 88

²⁰⁰⁶ *SJA*, L/F/08/A/11, 'Intelligence from Cherbourg', November 27th 1793 and L/F/08/A/14, Balcarres to Dundas, December 2nd 1793

²⁰⁰⁷ *TNA*, WO 1/391, Craig to Nepean, October 13th and 23rd 1793

been directed towards furthering the insurrection either in Brittany or the Vendée, the history of the French Revolutionary War – and by extension, the Napoleonic War – would likely have been very different.²⁰⁰⁸ However, from the evidence presented above, it is clear that such a conclusion rests upon an unrealistic view of what might have been achievable, even had it been for the British to assist the royalists in securing a port or other beachhead, or make use of their armies in the context of ‘conventional’ operations.

In assessing the success of the British government’s use of the Channel Islands as a platform from which to provide assistance to the royalists and the *chouans*, it is necessary to emphasise the fact that the British government was always sceptical of the potential of the insurrection. Indeed, even when confronted with the news that the royalist army – supposedly 30,000 strong – had ‘annihilated’ the garrison of St. Malo in pitched battle²⁰⁰⁹ and lain siege to Granville²⁰¹⁰ – intelligence which served as the catalyst for Moira’s Expedition – the British stance remained on a ‘reactionary’ footing. Thus, although the most recent intelligence from Brittany appeared to indicate that the Republicans had drawn upon ‘every reinforcement that St. Malo and the vicinity is capable of furnishing’, Balcarres warned that it would still be unwise to overcommit British strength in support of the royalists. Indeed, referring to the hypothetical ‘worst case scenario’, he concluded that the ‘probable consequence’ of the British forces being compelled to retreat would be the ‘crushing to pieces [of] the Vendéen army’, with the Republican regime being ‘fixed more firmly in their seats than at any time before’.²⁰¹¹ Thus, although Moira’s Expedition has been long been

²⁰⁰⁸ King, ‘The British Government, Émigrés and Royalists’, pp. 351 and 355

²⁰⁰⁹ TNA, WO 1/391, ‘Extract of a Letter from Balcarres to Dundas’, November 4th 1793

²⁰¹⁰ Ibid, Balcarres to Dundas, November 14th 1793

²⁰¹¹ SJA, L/F/08/A/16, Balcarres to Moira, December 8th 1793

regarded as having represented the British government's best chance of linking up with the royalists,²⁰¹² sensitivity to the risks of failure led to the initiative being lost and Balcarres' warning becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Moreover, while it is possible to appreciate the rationale behind King's conclusion that the history of the British government's involvement in the counter-Revolution constitutes a history of 'wasted opportunities', such a view is only truly possible with the benefit of hindsight. As Sutherland observed, any form of armed insurrection, whether in the Vendée or in Brittany, remained conditional upon the peasant leadership transferring their loyalties from the Revolution to Royalism.²⁰¹³ Consequently, as has been already mentioned, the nature of both the counter-Revolution in general and the *Chouannerie* in particular was far closer to that of a brush-fire than a universal conflagration, and outbreaks of large-scale disorder and rebellion remained highly localised affairs.²⁰¹⁴ In addition, it must be remembered that in spite of 'the sacrifices of the gallant Charette, Stofflet, Scipineau and such of the other chiefs who have perished',²⁰¹⁵ none of these individuals was ever able to claim overall control of the entire royalist insurgency. Indeed, the impossibility of uniting this fractured movement was acknowledged by D'Auvergne as early as October 1798, when he informed Windham that the raising of Brittany and Maine could be achieved only by 'the presence and high influence of a French Prince with great and evident means to support it'.²⁰¹⁶

²⁰¹² Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*, Vol. I. p. 55

²⁰¹³ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, p. 13

²⁰¹⁴ Bell, *The First Total War*, p. 164

²⁰¹⁵ BL, MS 37861, Intelligence from D'Auvergne to Portland, June 20th 1796

²⁰¹⁶ TNA, FO 95/605/105, D'Auvergne to Windham, October 12th 1798

Even if the British government can be said to have missed the opportunity to exploit the counter-Revolution in the manner which King suggests, this should not lead us to downplay the importance of the insurrection as a psychological weapon. Not only does Carrier's correspondence indicate that the French government treated the potential for a British-backed royalist insurgency as a significant threat (see above),²⁰¹⁷ but the terror which was inspired by the *chouans* was considerable. In April 1795, provisions were already short at Quimper,²⁰¹⁸ and by July, the success with which the *chouans* were 'intercepting convoys, stopping couriers and destroying bridges' was such that Brest was described as being 'almost entirely cut off by land from the rest of the province'.²⁰¹⁹ In December, D'Auvergne reported that the hinterland was in a state of 'general confusion and extreme misery', with Granville 'almost in a state of blockade' and Avranches suffering want of supplies,²⁰²⁰ and later intelligence received from his agents at Brest indicated that this situation continued even after the suppression of the Vendée. In late November 1799, for example, it was reported that 'forty tons of gunpowder and two hundred stand-of-arms had arrived thence under the guard of sixty infantry', and that a convoy had been dispatched from Nantes 'loaded with grain and flower for the fleet', then 'reduced to three months' provisions, exclusive of bread'.²⁰²¹

Consequently, although it proved impossible for the British government to intervene in the counter-Revolution on the scale demanded by Puisaye and his colleagues, their involvement in the Western Provinces should be seen

²⁰¹⁷ 'Carrier to the Committee of Public Safety, November 11th, 1793', reproduced in Carrier, *Correspondence*, p. 88

²⁰¹⁸ TNA, PC 1/117B, 'Declaration of Two English Seamen Who Escaped From St. Malo', April 1795

²⁰¹⁹ TNA, WO 1/921/135, July 19th 1795; and FO 95/605/18, D'Auvergne to Windham, July 27th 1795

²⁰²⁰ TNA, FO 95/606, D'Auvergne to Woodford, December 19th 1795; and PC 1/117B, D'Auvergne to Dundas, December 19th 1795

²⁰²¹ BL, Add MS 37966, Intelligence from D'Auvergne, dated November 26th 1799

nonetheless as a strategic success. It is true that the uprising in the Vendée was crushed by the *colonnes infernales*,²⁰²² but final victory over Charette and his colleagues came at a significant cost to the Republicans, both in terms of manpower and equipment.²⁰²³ Moreover, every success achieved by the Vendéens – however minor – served to give encouragement to the *chouans* and, as demonstrated by the collapse of the planned invasion of the Channel Islands (see chapter three), compromise French military and naval operations in other areas. Consequently, while D'Auvergne can be seen to have enjoyed only limited success in facilitating the transmission of supplies to the Continent – either for the use of the Vendéens or the *chouans* – it is possible to argue that the strategic importance of this aspect of his duties was not defined by its material success. Even after the events of 1804 dealt a fatal blow to the British government's confidence in the royalists, fears of an alliance between the two obliged the French authorities to devote much-needed manpower to patrolling of the coast and intercepting enemy agents.

²⁰²² Bell, *The First Total War*, p. 156

²⁰²³ Sutherland, *The Chouans*, p. 26

Chapter Ten – Conclusion

Despite being spared almost entirely from hostile contact with the enemy, it is clear that the Channel Islands' involvement in the Great French War was far more complex than might at first be assumed. Fortunately, in seeking to provide an overview of the development of the bailiwicks' involvement in the British war effort, the evidence presented herein would suggest that the period under investigation may be broken down into a number of key phases. The first of these, spanning 1792-94, covers such crucial issues as the arrival of the *émigrés* and the abortive invasion under Rossignol; events which served both to emphasise the vulnerability of the Channel Islands and their potential value as a conduit between Britain and the French coast. The second phase, lasting from 1794 to 1806, was dominated by the development of the Channel Islands region as a 'zone of control' on the Anglo-French maritime border, and also witnessed the zenith of their exploitation as a nerve-centre of espionage and commerce-raiding. Finally, the years 1806-15 witnessed the emergence of the Channel Islands as a chain of fortified outposts: the modernisation of the military roads, the creation of the 'second generation' inter-insular signal system and the completion of Fort Regent and Fort George representing the culmination of Don and Doyle's vision for local defence.

In addition to these phases of development, it is possible to highlight several critical moments at which the intersection of several of the issues investigated within this thesis caused significant change either to life in the bailiwicks or the ability of the British to exploit the Channel Islands in strategic terms. The closing months of 1793 provide perhaps the clearest example of such a juncture: while

French military preparations led the local authorities to view the *émigré* community as a security risk, the demands for intelligence also resulted in their exploitation as a 'recruitment pool' for confidential agents. In addition, while this initial threat passed without incident, it was appreciated that the invasion had been abandoned only due to the outbreak of counter-Revolutionary violence, thereby providing a justification for using the Channel Islands as a depot for aid to the insurgency. Likewise, it is possible to see Gordon's death in April 1806 as another crucial intersection, since the lack of disruption which arose in relation to the progress of local defensive improvements serves to demonstrate the effectiveness of his reforms in terms of maintaining social and political control. Moreover, the appointment of Don as his successor led to closer collaboration between the authorities in the bailiwicks, while his effective working relationship with D'Auvergne and other naval officers enabled the Channel Islands to remain relevant within the context of blockade warfare and intelligence-gathering.

Despite being spared from hostile contact with the enemy, the bailiwicks emerged largely unrecognisable from the Great French War, the influx of refugees and garrison troops having triggered a series of demographic and cultural shifts. Likewise, local defensive needs served to accelerate – and ultimately fulfil – a program of reforms which had lost impetus during the lengthy peace following the American Revolutionary War. Moreover, it must be emphasised that the preceding analysis serves to guard against any temptation to dismiss the Channel Islands as a mere historical curiosity, or to cast doubt upon the nature of the threat which faced them from the Continent, either before or after the traditional historiographical 'watershed' of Trafalgar. In the eyes of both the British and French authorities, the bailiwicks were regarded as

occupying an important 'front line' position, and while commentators such as Shebbeare may have been prone to hyperbole,²⁰²⁴ their assessment was by no means inaccurate. Nonetheless, it is important that a sense of perspective is maintained, and that any conclusions drawn with respect to the strategic value of the Channel Islands during the conflict observe the same degree of nuance which has characterised the main body of this study.

The Islands as a Military Outpost and Strategic Asset

Throughout the Great French War, the successive commanders in the Channel Islands were consistent in their efforts to champion the strategic value of the bailiwicks; however, none displayed a greater level of zeal in this regard than Don and Doyle.²⁰²⁵ While the former declared his confidence that the local militia – if called to arms – might match the abilities of any regular troops,²⁰²⁶ the latter sought to solicit financial aid by claiming that 'His Majesty's Ministers cannot but regard these Islands as valuable to England'.²⁰²⁷ More importantly, such an attitude reflected the stance adopted by the local civil powers when faced with the need to allay government fears concerning the nature of the Channel Islands as a potential security risk. When the invasion scare of 1794 gave rise to rumours that the bailiwicks might fall prey to the Republican ideology, the States responded by declaring the inhabitants' 'inviolable attachment to the best of Kings and to the British government'.²⁰²⁸ Similarly, the potential 'fall-out' of the violent clashes between the local privateers and the press gang during the Napoleonic War was deflected by an appeal to the

²⁰²⁴ Shebbeare, *Authentic Narrative*, Vol. I, pp. vii-viii

²⁰²⁵ Anon, *Sonnet Number Two*, reproduced in *ABSJ* 1:8 (1885)

²⁰²⁶ *SJA*, A/C1/1, General Order of May 14th 1803 and *Guernsey Star*, June 20th 1813

²⁰²⁷ *GSG*, A/IV/80/1, Letter of July 25th 1809

²⁰²⁸ *SJA*, L/F/97/M2/39, De Carteret, *Greffier*, to *The Times*, March 15th 1794

‘character of loyalty which their ancestors have ever possessed, and which...the present inhabitants eminently glow with’.²⁰²⁹

However, while it is evident that the civil and military authorities were united in their advocacy of the Channel Islands as a strategic forward base, it was also acknowledged that any advantages which might be derived from their remaining in British hands were strictly limited. In spite of the significant sums of money which were invested in the defence of the bailiwicks (see chapter three), it would be naïve indeed to conclude that the British regarded the possession of the Channel Islands as being critical to the success of their wider military and naval objectives. Even Don and Doyle – both conscious of the continued threat posed to the bailiwicks and the likely consequences of their falling into French hands²⁰³⁰ – did not lose sight of the fact that the strategic potential of the Channel Islands remained dependent on a number of factors beyond their control.²⁰³¹ Although the importance of the Channel Islands within the context of intelligence gathering and commerce raiding was readily acknowledged both locally and in London,²⁰³² the difficulties which D’Auvergne had encountered during the winter of 1794 provided a clear demonstration of the limitations which impacted upon local maritime operations.

Indeed, the haphazard nature of the Channel Islands’ direct participation in Britain’s war effort was no better demonstrated than in relation to the attempts made to use the bailiwicks – or more specifically, Jersey – as a conduit for providing assistance to the royalists. In spite of the fact that a large stockpile of

²⁰²⁹ *GSG*, A/IV/80/1, Letter from Guernsey to the Admiralty, June 7th 1808

²⁰³⁰ *SJA*, L/F/95/A/38, Don to ‘Gentlemen’, August 13th 1809

²⁰³¹ *TNA*, FO 95/605/4, D’Auvergne to Windham, December 28th 1794

²⁰³² *TNA*, FO 95/605/1, D’Auvergne to Windham, November 4th 1794

arms, munitions and other supplies was established at *Mont Orgueil*,²⁰³³ the inclement weather and the close attention of the enemy all too often led to the failure of the attempted 'supply drops'.²⁰³⁴ This, in turn, meant that later efforts to sustain the insurgency in the Western Provinces were justified purely through appeals to their value as a 'fifth column', since even D'Auvergne appears to have lost all confidence in the royalists as a potential 'conventional' force.²⁰³⁵ Likewise in the context of blockade warfare, it has been illustrated that the Channel Islands – lacking as they did the infrastructure and resources offered by bases in the Mediterranean – were able to perform a meaningful role only within the 'strategical-commercial' blockade.²⁰³⁶ Not until the middle of the nineteenth century, when Alderney was developed as a base for steam-powered gunboats blockading Cherbourg,²⁰³⁷ were similar attempts made to expand St. Helier and St. Catherine into 'deep water' harbours.²⁰³⁸

The Economics of Warfare

Such a conclusion is further reinforced by the fact that even the combined effort of the civil and military powers in both Bailiwicks was insufficient to solicit anything more than a token investment from London. While a number of senior British Ministers can be seen to have recognised the threat to the Islands as being both genuine and significant, such views appear to have been tempered by an assumption that French operations against the Islands would never

²⁰³³ TNA, FO 95/613, 'Serviceable Stores at Jersey', November 1799

²⁰³⁴ TNA, FO 95/605/51, D'Auvergne to Windham, May 1796

²⁰³⁵ TNA, FO 95/609, 'Sketch of the Intrigues', October 12th 1798

²⁰³⁶ Corbett, *Principles of Maritime Strategy*, pp. 96-97

²⁰³⁷ S.T. Grimes, *Strategy and War Planning in the British Navy, 1887 to 1918* (Woodbridge, 2012) pp. 31-32; and A.D. Lambert, 'The Royal Navy, 1856-1914: Deterrence and the Strategy of World Power', in K. Neilson and E.J. Errington, *Navies and Global Defence: Theories and Strategy* (Westport, Connecticut, 1995) p. 79

²⁰³⁸ SJA, D/AP/V/7, 'Piers and Harbours Department General Correspondence, Including the Construction of St Helier Harbour and St Catherine's Breakwater', March 30th 1847 to December 17th 1851

represent more than a means to an end. For example, when provided with intelligence of French naval preparations in the summer of 1796, it was concluded that the enemy intended to seize either the Channel Islands or the Îles de Saint-Marcouf.²⁰³⁹ However, the opinion amongst officers ‘on the ground’ appears to have been somewhat more cautious: Warren, for example, predicted that the intended operations would prove to be only ‘a false attack...to cover a surprise’ and, more specifically, ‘a great stroke...upon Ireland, Corsica, Gibraltar, or the West Indies’.²⁰⁴⁰ Furthermore, it must be acknowledged that this view was seemingly vindicated by the erroneous nature of many warnings concerning the imminence of a French attack;²⁰⁴¹ such reports failing to account for the enemy’s inability to overcome the very hazards which so often thwarted the activities of *La Correspondence*.²⁰⁴²

Even so, the fact that the degree of financial support directed towards the Islands by the British government amounted to only a fraction of the former’s total defence costs should not lead us to suggest that the Islands were perceived as expendable. Rather, it should be taken as an indication of the extent to which – even when confronted with apparently vital issues of security – the local commanders appear to have been loath to demand large sums from Britain’s coffers. For example, not only did Don express no objections to being granted an allowance of only £3,000 in 1806 – at a time when a single Martello Tower cost £1,500 – but he expressed his intent to draw upon these funds ‘only

²⁰³⁹ Spencer to Strachan, July 7th 1796, reproduced in Corbett and Richmond (eds.), *Papers of the Second Earl Spencer*, Vol. I, pp. 270-271

²⁰⁴⁰ Warren to Spencer, August 7th 1796, reproduced in *Ibid*, Vol. I, pp. 272-274

²⁰⁴¹ TNA, WO 1/921/311, Peronne to D’Auvergne, December 30th 1796; and WO 1/923/407, ‘Intelligence from St. Malo’, undated, 1801

²⁰⁴² TNA, WO 1/922/241, ‘Intelligence from Le Havre and Cherbourg’, January 9th 1797

as wanted'.²⁰⁴³ Similarly, when approaching the States with his plan for the military roads, Doyle argued that it would be sufficient for the British to provide 'a few thousand pounds judiciously expended',²⁰⁴⁴ and that the remaining costs could be met through local means. Moreover, although the local military authorities were able to call upon the support of the Master-General of the Ordnance²⁰⁴⁵ in their efforts to push forward the fortification of the Islands, this did not result in the denigration of established local laws. Indeed, not only did the military rely upon the consent of the civil powers when carrying out defensive improvements,²⁰⁴⁶ but with respect to the raising of funds, public subscription²⁰⁴⁷ was encouraged as an alternative to taxation.²⁰⁴⁸

It is clear, therefore, that while the Islands were considered to be valuable as an outpost, the overriding objective of both the local and national authorities was to ensure that the defence of the Bailiwicks was governed by pragmatism and economy. This stands in stark contrast to the image promoted by historians writing in the immediate aftermath of Waterloo, who sought to depict the Bailiwicks in glowing terms, describing them as being able to 'bid defiance to a besieging army' and having become 'impregnable, [save through the] certain sacrifice of a host of foes'.²⁰⁴⁹ In addition, it also serves to caution against the adoption of vainglorious claims such as those made by Davies, who openly laments that Fort Regent was never given the opportunity to 'show its prowess'

²⁰⁴³ SJA, L/F/95/A/4/3, 'Letter from George Don to Earl Spencer Concerning the Opinions of His Senior Officers on the Defence of Jersey', July 1st 1806

²⁰⁴⁴ GSG, A/IV/80/1, Letter from Government House, July 25th 1809

²⁰⁴⁵ Ibid, Letter from Government House, January 8th, 1807

²⁰⁴⁶ Ibid, Letter from Government House, February 12th, 1807

²⁰⁴⁷ Between October 1803 and April 1804, the programme to fortify the Town Hill received £1,500 17s in subscriptions. See SJA, L/F/22/E/25, 'List of Subscribers to the Works on the Town Hill', 1803-1804

²⁰⁴⁸ SJA, A/A5/2, Letter of October 10th 1809; and Sullivan, *General Don*, p. 22

²⁰⁴⁹ Berry, *The History of the Island of Guernsey*, pp. 111-112

by means of 'a glorious siege, victory, or proud failure'.²⁰⁵⁰ Although it is true that large numbers of men, material and funds were granted to the Channel Islands during the course of the War, this thesis has demonstrated that such investments were subject to the needs of Britain's forces in other theatres and on other fronts. At no point were the Bailiwicks permitted to consume resources which could be better employed elsewhere: as illustrated by the fact that garrison regiments in the Islands were frequently withdrawn for 'active' service or reinforced with raw recruits,²⁰⁵¹ while additional naval reinforcements were often delayed, if not refused entirely.²⁰⁵²

Unanswered Questions

While the individual elements of this thesis are not, in and of themselves, original subjects for research, it is hoped that the preceding investigation has served to shed additional light on the strategic advantages derived by the British Government from their possession of the Channel Islands. Each of the preceding chapters has both augmented and synthesised existing research undertaken by a number of key scholars and has illustrated that – at least within the strictly defined context of the Channel theatre – the bailiwicks may be rightly regarded as having been of significant military value. However, it must be noted that this thesis has raised three questions which remain unanswered, and which may provide a starting point for further research on both a local and national level. Firstly, the involvement of the Channel Islands in the Great French War resulted in numerous economic, social and political shifts, the consequences of

²⁰⁵⁰ Davies, *Fort Regent*, p. 37

²⁰⁵¹ SJA, L/C/68/A/1, Le Couteur to the *Connétable* of St. Brelade, November 16th 1803; and A/A1/1, Letter of November 3rd 1807

²⁰⁵² TNA, FO 95/605/18, D'Auvergne to Windham, July 27th 1795

which reached far beyond the defeat of Napoleon, influencing local life well into the nineteenth century. Unfortunately, as may be observed from the coverage of issues such as smuggling, privateering, the military roads and troop healthcare, this thesis has discussed these changes solely in relation to their military significance. Only an additional, dedicated study will reveal the true extent of their impact on the civilian population, and expose the manner in which wartime reforms helped to cement prosperity for the Channel Islands in peacetime.

The second unanswered question relates to the redistribution of credit for the defence of the Channel Islands: an issue which – in spite of having driven this investigation in its early stages – was ultimately relegated to secondary importance by other considerations. At several points within this study, it has been argued that a local variant of ‘Nelsonian mystique’²⁰⁵³ has distorted our view of the Channel Islands’ role in the Great French War; D’Auvergne, Don and Doyle having dominated, respectively, Franco-British, Jersey and Guernsey historians’ accounts of the period. While the preceding study has highlighted that their successes were often reliant upon the efforts of their colleagues and subordinates – such as, in the case of Don, the man-management abilities of Humfrey – the fact remains that such contributions remain largely concealed beneath the shadow of the ‘Great Triumvirate’. Even within the ‘narrative’ framework of this thesis, Don, Doyle and D’Auvergne have remained the dominant figures, while even men such as Conway and Gordon have featured as members of a ‘supporting cast’. However, it is hoped that the breadth of topics covered within this study – and more specifically, the use of previously

²⁰⁵³ Voelcker, *Saumarez vs. Napoleon: The Baltic, 1807-12*, p. 22

undervalued archival material – shall enable research to be more easily conducted into the careers of those who have been unfairly obscured.

Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge the fact that this thesis has investigated the strategic and tactical position of the Channel Islands solely from the perspective of Britain and the bailiwicks themselves. Although some ‘external’ sources – such as intercepted French military documents, Parisian newspapers, and intelligence reports from foreign agents – have been employed, it remains the case that the ‘reality’ of French intentions towards the Channel Islands remain unproven. In spite of numerous reports concerning troop mobilisation against the bailiwicks,²⁰⁵⁴ and the condemnation of the Islanders within the pages of *Le Moniteur*,²⁰⁵⁵ no attacks ever came to fruition. Unfortunately, without undertaking a more extensive investigation of French archival sources, it is impossible to determine whether the Channel Islands were ever truly in danger of invasion, or whether these supposed attacks were a mere feint designed to distract the attention of the Royal Navy. While it must be admitted that such an investigation would add another level of nuance to the subject of this thesis, it would not change the overall conclusion that the Channel Islands enhanced a number of aspects of the British war effort. Likewise, it does not matter whether the French government ever truly desired to seize the Channel Islands; the reality is that they convinced the British that this was their intent, and that considerable resources had to be devoted to their protection.

²⁰⁵⁴ TNA, WO 1/923/407, Intelligence from St. Malo, undated, 1801

²⁰⁵⁵ Ashelford, *In the English Service*, p. 115

Appendix A – The Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey

Bailiwick of Jersey

Jersey

Minquiers Reef (Uninhabited)

Écréhous Reef (Uninhabited)

Les Dirouillies (Uninhabited)

Les Pierres de Lecq (Uninhabited)

Bailiwick of Guernsey

Guernsey

Alderney

Sark

Herm

Jethou (Private Island)

Brecquou (Private Island)

Lihou (Private Island)

Burhou (Uninhabited)

Casquets (Uninhabited)

Ortac (Uninhabited)

Renonquet (Uninhabited)

Crevichon (Uninhabited)

Grande Amfroque (Uninhabited)

Les Houmets (Uninhabited)

Appendix B – Governors, Lieutenant-Governors and Commanders-in-Chief of
the Bailiwicks of Jersey and Guernsey, 1793-1815

Governors of Jersey

1772-1795 – Field Marshal Henry Seymour Conway

1795-1796 – Field Marshal Sir George Howard

1796-1807 – Marquess Townshend

1807-1820 – Earl of Chatham

Lieutenant-Governors of Jersey

1782 – Lieutenant-Colonel Philippe Fall

1797 – Lieutenant-General Andrew Gordon

1806 – General Sir George Don GCB GCH

1814 – General Sir Thomkyns Hilgrove Turner GCH

Commanders-in-Chief of Jersey²⁰⁵⁶

1782 – Colonel Richard Whyte

1793 – Colonel James Henry Craig

1793 – Rt. Hon. Lord Balcarres

1795 – Lieutenant-General Andrew Gordon

²⁰⁵⁶ The posts of Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief were amalgamated upon Lieutenant-General Gordon's appointment to the former office.

Governors of Guernsey

1770–1797 – Field Marshal Sir Jeffery Amherst, 1st Baron Amherst

1797–1807 – General Charles Grey, 1st Earl Grey

1807–1827 – Lieutenant-General George Herbert, 11th Earl of Pembroke

Lieutenant-Governors and Commanders-in-Chief²⁰⁵⁷ of Guernsey

1784 – Lieutenant-Colonel William Brown

1793 – Major-General Thomas Dundas

1793 – Colonel James Henry Craig

1793 – Major-General John Small

1796 – Lieutenant-General Sir Hew Dalrymple

1803 – Major-General Sir John Doyle Bt, GCB, KC

Hereditary Governors and Commanders-in-Chief of Alderney

1744-1793 – John Le Mesurier II

1745-1763 – John Le Cocq (Acting)

1793-1802 – Peter Le Mesurier

1802–1828 – General John Le Mesurier III

²⁰⁵⁷ The posts of Lieutenant-Governor and Commander-in-Chief were combined during Major-General John Small's term of office.

Appendix C – List of Vessels Stationed at Le Havre, Cherbourg and Nantes for
the Invasion of the Channel Islands, February 17th 1794²⁰⁵⁸

List of Gunboats at Le Havre

L’Ethna (three 24-pounder guns)

La Foudre (three 24-pounder guns)

La Terrible (three 24-pounder guns)

La Fulminante (three 24-pounder guns)

La Tempête (three 24-pounder guns)

La Citoyenne (five 24-pounder guns)

La Salamandre (six 6-pounder cannon and two 12-pounder mortars)²⁰⁵⁹

List of Gunboats at Cherbourg

La Chalier (unknown number of 24-pounder guns)

Le Furet (two 24-pounder guns)

L’Eclair (three 18-pounder guns)

Le Chat (three 18-pounder guns)

Le Sinon (three 18-pounder guns)

La Mouche (three 24-pounder guns)

La Souris (three 24-pounder guns)

²⁰⁵⁸ Extracted from *SJA*, L/F/08/H/9, ‘List of Gunboats Assembled in France for the Proposed Invasion of the Channel Islands’, February 17th 1794

²⁰⁵⁹ Described as a ‘Bomb Vessel’ rather than a ‘Gunboat’

List of Armed Transports at Nantes:

Le St. Jacques (one 36-pounder and two 8-pounders)

La Victoire (one mortar of unknown calibre, two 12-pounder cannon)

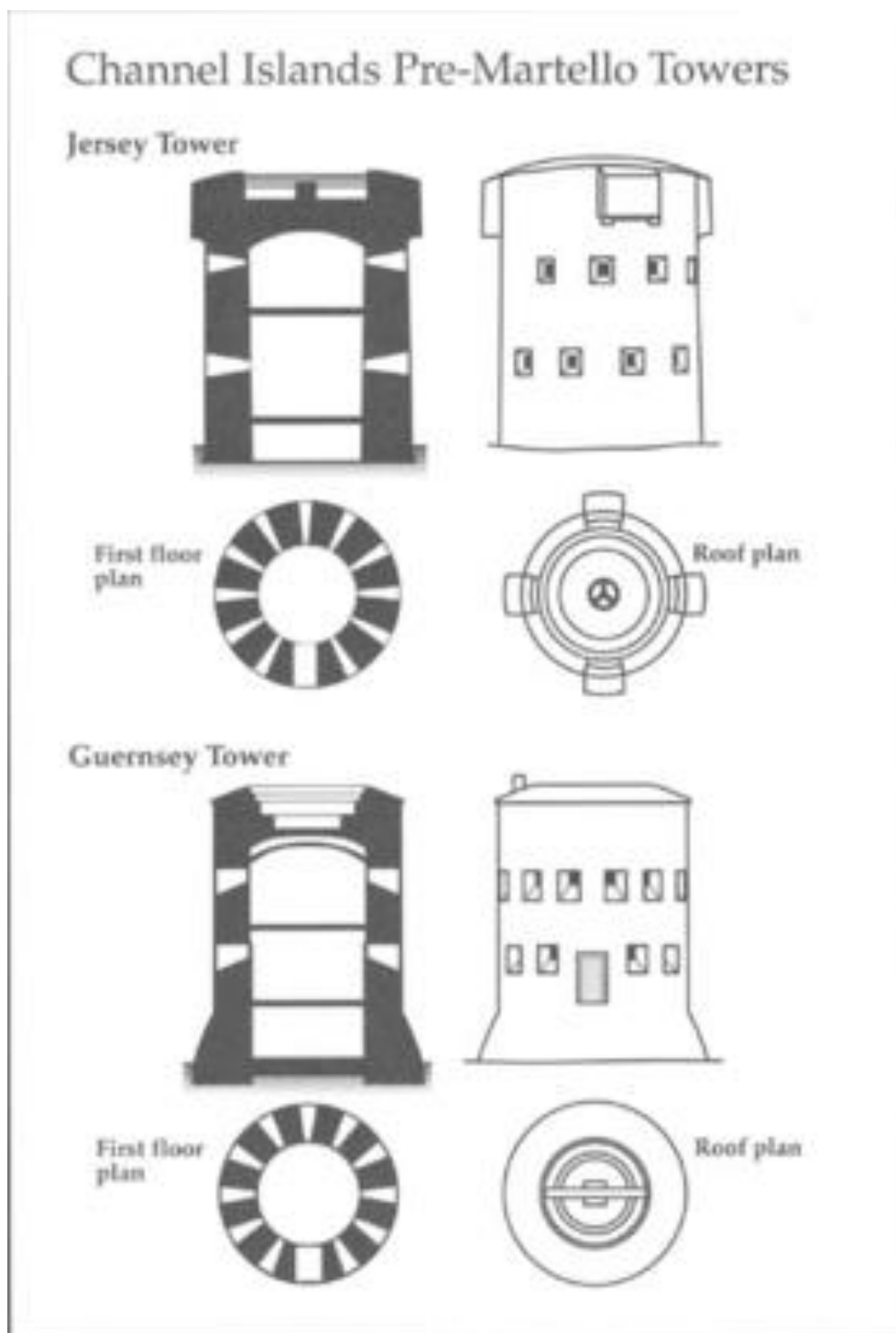
La Magdelaine (one 36-pounder and two 8-pounders)

La Cadiche (one 36-pounder and two 8-pounders)

La Grande Julie (one mortar of unknown calibre, two 8-pounder cannons)

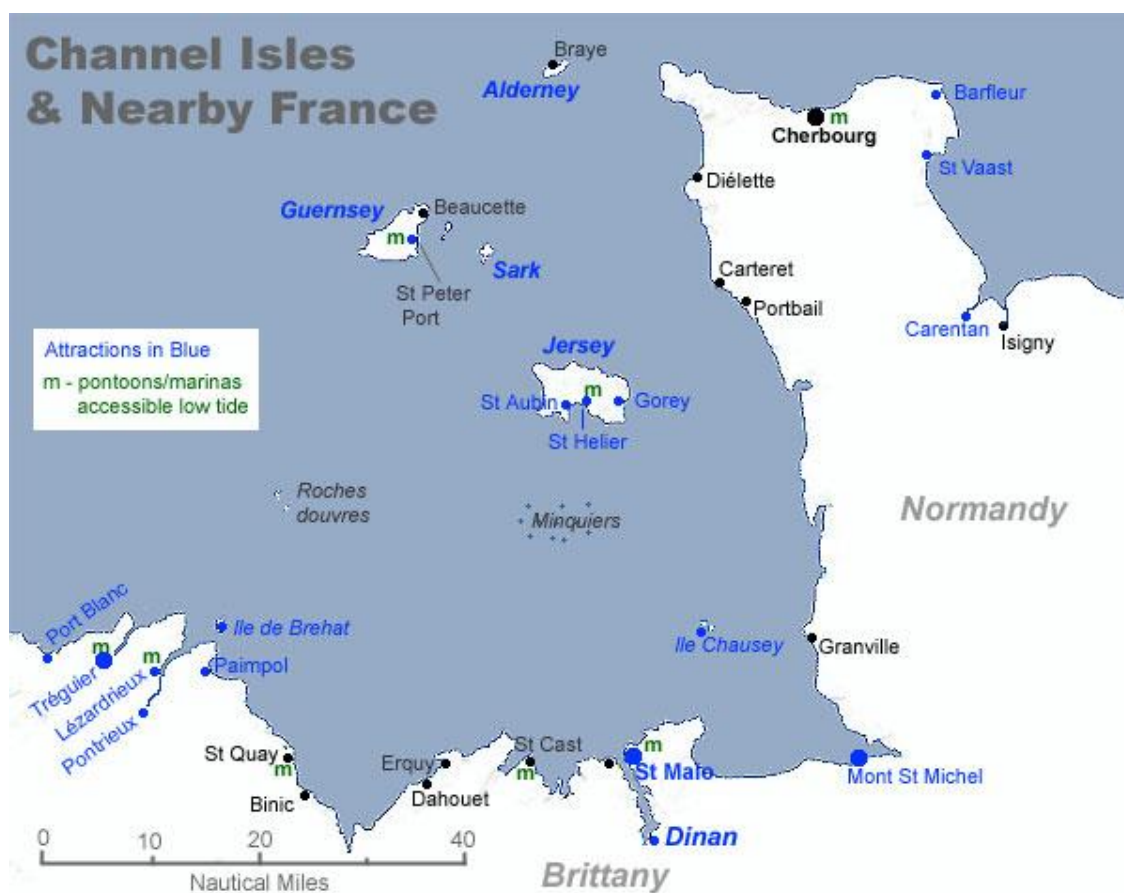
La Blanche (two 18-pounders and two 8-pounders)

Appendix D – Comparative Schematic of the Conway Towers



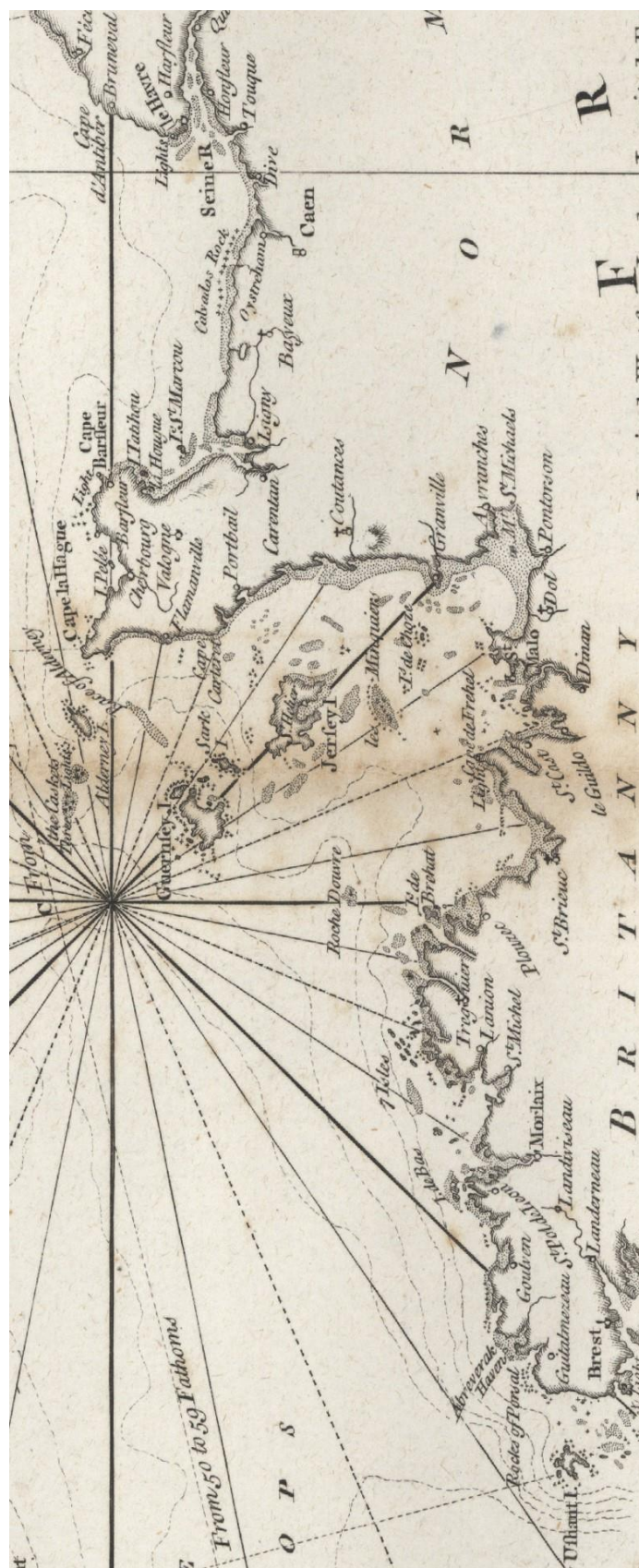
Source: W.H. Clements, *Towers of Strength: Martello Towers Worldwide* (London, 1998)

Map A – The Channel Islands in Relation to the French Coast



Source: <http://www.jimbsail.info/>

Map B – The French Channel Coast from Le Havre to Ushant, 1793



Source: Detail from SJA, L/F/120/A/81, Chart by W. Faden, 1793

Map C – The Department of Manche, 1801



Source: Detail from SJA, L/F/120/A/90, Map of Part of France and the Channel Islands, Published in Venice, 1801

Map D – The Department of Ile-et-Vilaine, 1801



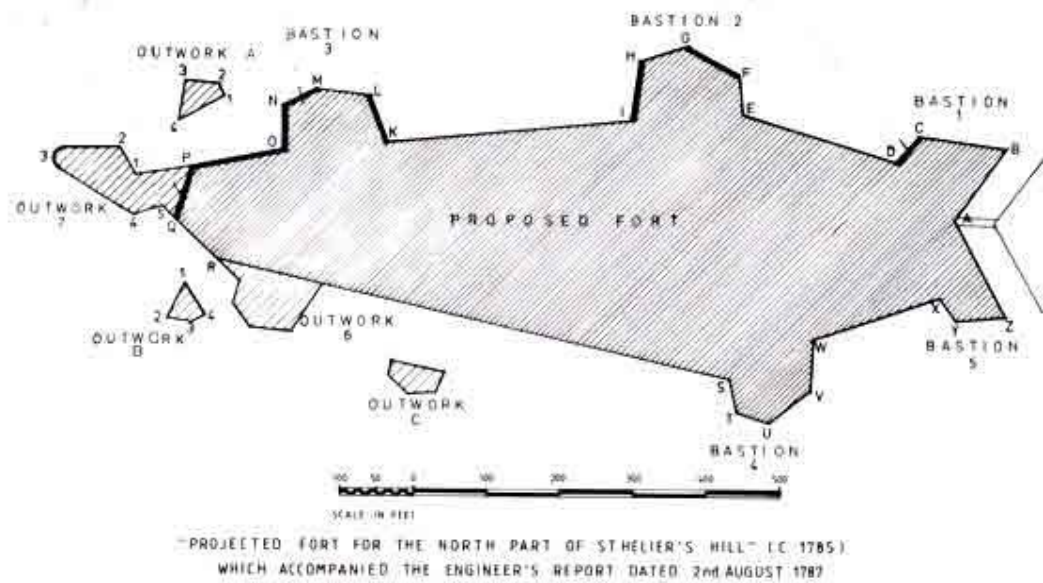
Source: Detail from SJA, L/F/120/A/90, Map of Part of France and the Channel Islands, Published in Venice, 1801

Map F – Map of the Town of St. Helier, 1800



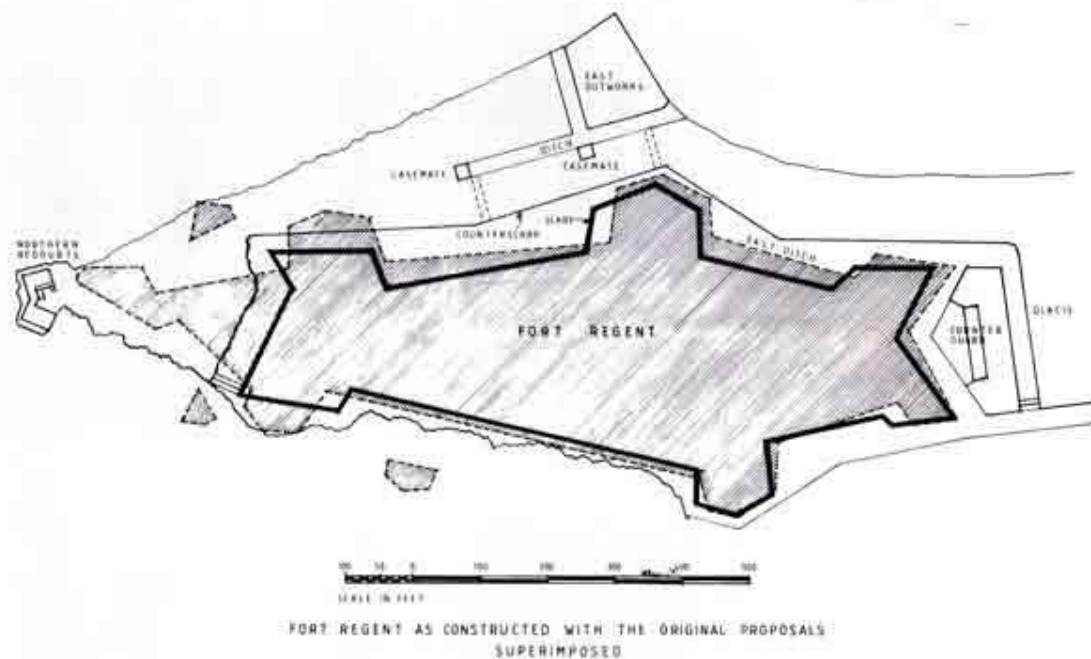
Source: SJA, L/F/120/A/126, 'Plans of the Town of St. Helier in 1800 and 1860, Illustrating the Growth of the Town and the Development of the Harbour, Presented to J. Poindestre by Thomas Le Breton in 1862'

Map G – Plan of Fort Regent as Proposed in 1787



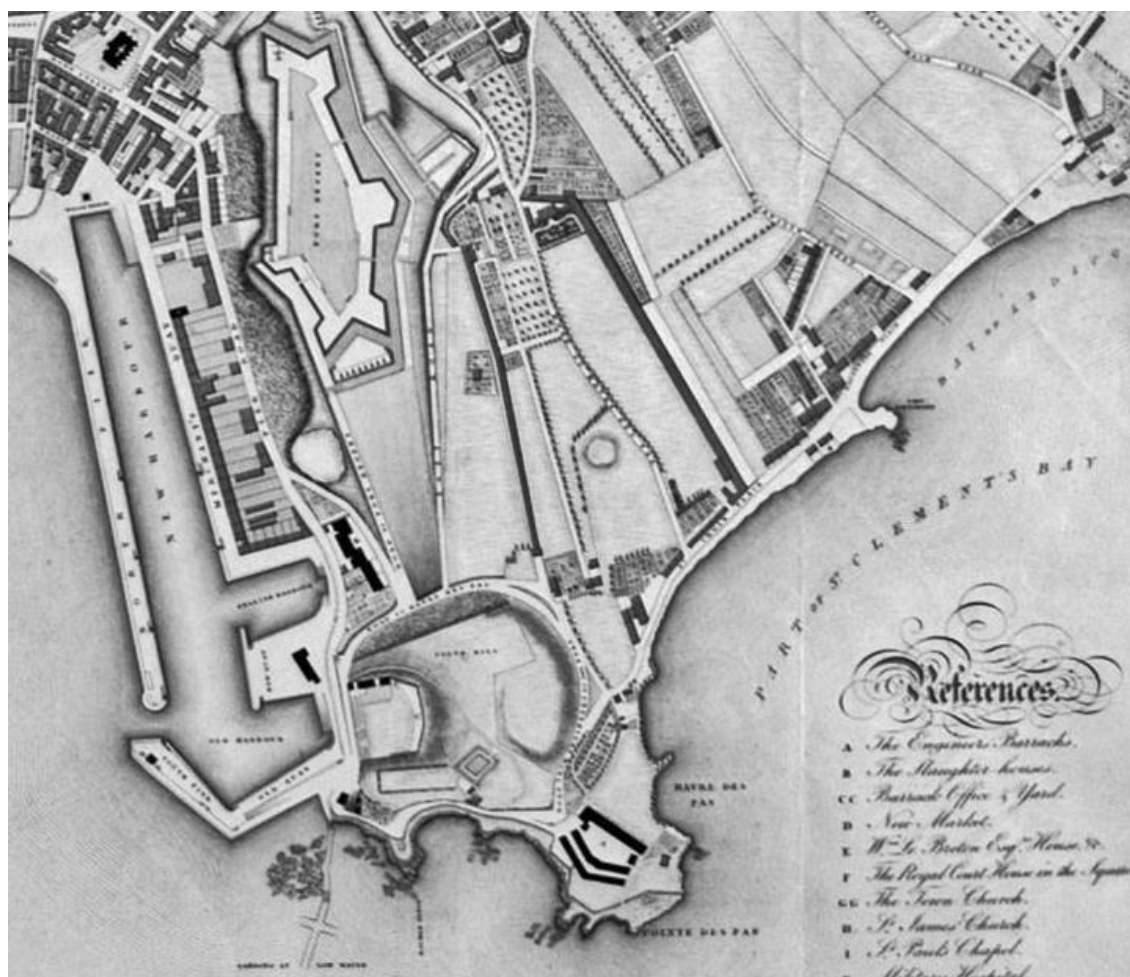
Source: Davies, 'Early Proposals' 513

Map H – Outline Map of Fort Regent Superimposed Over Original Proposed Sketch, Date Unknown



Source: Davies, 'Early Proposals' 515

Map I – Detail from the Le Gros Map of St. Helier, 1834



Source: SJA, P/09/A/148, Photographic Slide of Le Gros' Map of St. Helier

Map J – Completed Fortifications in St. Aubin's Bay, 1817



Source: Detail from SJA, L/F/120/A/100, Engraved by Samuel J. Neele, from a Survey Carried Out to Illustrate Plees, *An Account of the Island of Jersey*, 1817

Map K – Completed Fortifications in St. Ouen's Bay, 1817



Source: Detail from SJA, L/F/120/A/100, Engraved by Samuel J. Neele, from a Survey Carried Out to Illustrate Plees, *An Account of the Island of Jersey*, 1817

Map L – Completed Fortifications in Grouville and St. Clement, 1817



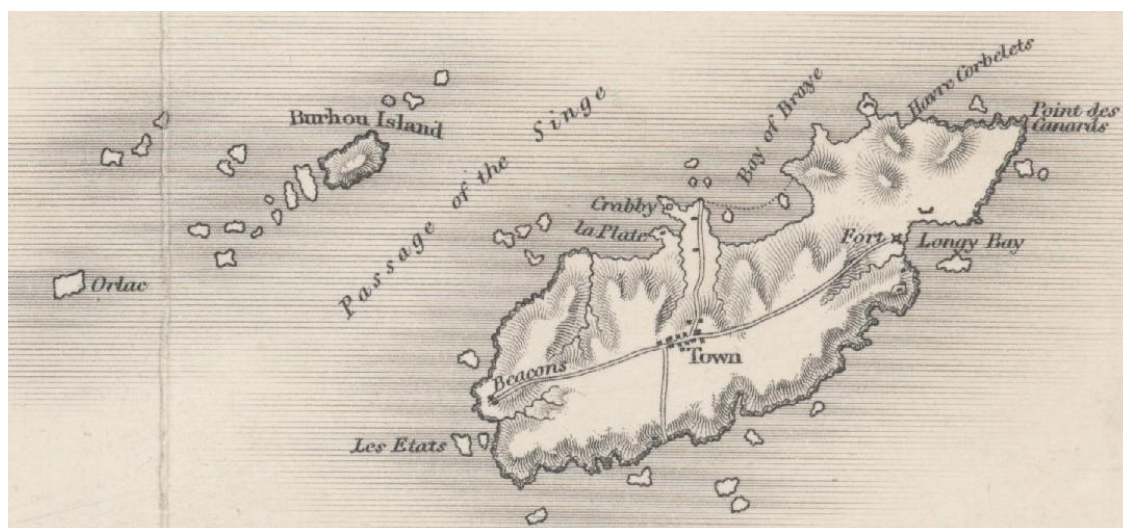
Source: Detail from SJA, L/F/120/A/100, Engraved by Samuel J. Neele, from a Survey Carried Out to Illustrate Plees, *An Account of the Island of Jersey*, 1817

Map M – Completed Fortifications in Bouley Bay and Rozel Bay, 1817



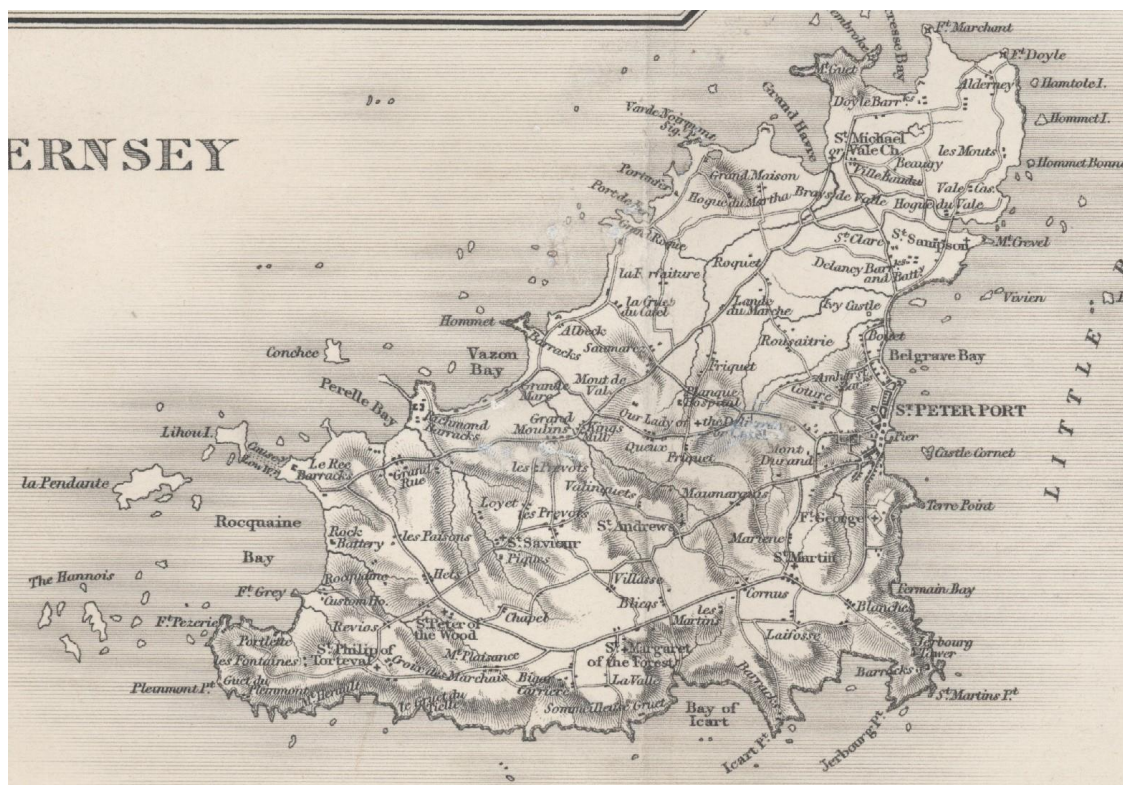
Source: Detail from SJA, L/F/120/A/100, Engraved by Samuel J. Neele, from a Survey Carried Out to Illustrate Plees, *An Account of the Island of Jersey*, 1817

Map N – Map of Alderney Showing Completed Military Roads



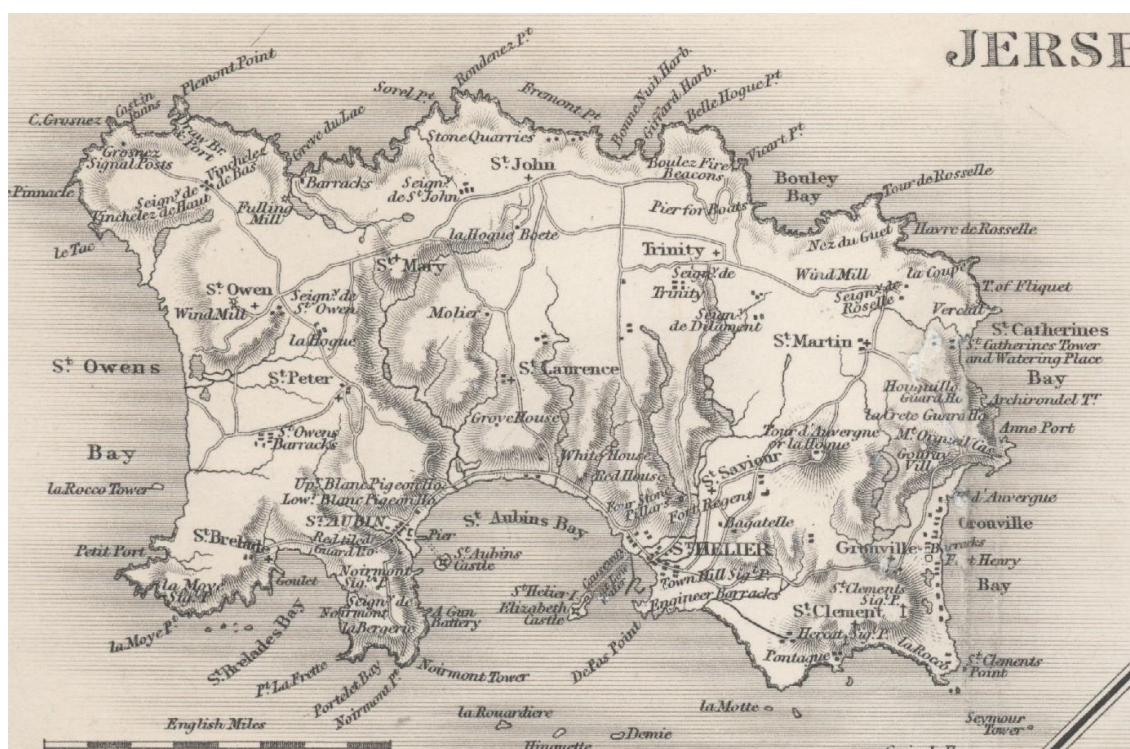
Source: Detail from *SJA*, L/F/120/A/105, Engraved by R. Mudie, 1839

Map O – Map of Guernsey Showing Completed Military Roads



Source: Detail from *SJA*, L/F/120/A/105, Engraved by R. Mudie, 1839

Map P – Map of Jersey Showing Completed Military Roads



Source: Detail from SJA, L/F/120/A/105, Engraved by R. Mudie, 1839

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- HCA 26/6/11 – ‘Declaration of Letters of Marque for the Privateer *Caesar*, September 22nd 1756’
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- HO 42/81 – ‘Letters and Papers, June 1st to December 31st 1805’
- HO 69/2 – ‘War Office to the Prince of Bouillon, 1796-1801’
- HO 69/3 – ‘Admiralty to the Prince of Bouillon, 1789-1801’
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- L/F/08/L/17 – ‘List of Articles Concerning the Rules for the Guernsey Militia, May 14th 1797’
- L/F/22/B/7 – ‘Printed Acts of the States and Orders in Council Relating to Tumultuous Assemblies, Taverners, Duties on Wine, Leather Tanners and the Repeal of Taxation on Annual Rents and the Establishment of Permanent Taxation, 1797’
- L/F/22/E/2 – ‘Extract from the Minutes of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* re. the Building of Fortifications on the Town Hill, 1781-1803’
- L/F/22/E/7 – ‘Notification of a Meeting of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* Concerning the Disposition of Vacant Lands, January 7th 1796’
- L/F/22/E/9 – ‘Printed Minutes of the Meeting of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* Concerning the Granting of the Town Hill to the Crown, July 6th 1796’
- L/F/22/E/11 – ‘Notification of a Meeting of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* to Discuss the Site of the Proposed Fort on the Town Hill, July 11th 1796’
- L/F/22/E/13 – ‘Notification of a Meeting of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* to Discuss the Building of a Troop Hospital on the Town Hill, September 16th 1796’
- L/F/22/E/16 – ‘Summons to the *Proprietaires* of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* to Meet to Discuss the Proposition that a Public Road be Built from St Helier to St Clement, 1798’
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- L/F/22/E/39 – ‘Printed Letter to the Inhabitants of the *Vingtaine de la Ville* re. the Fortification of the Town Hill, March 6th 1805’
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- L/F/67/A/1 – ‘Letters of Marque for the Ship *Lottery*, November 29th 1797’
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